INSIGHTS

Westbourne Associates Pte. Ltd.

What is the impact of AI on leadership today? From a coaching and leadership development perspective, what are the next steps?

As the Artificial Intelligence (AI) wave gathers momentum, leaders across the globe are steering their teams and organizations through uncharted waters. They are facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The rapid advance of AI holds immense potential to reshape industries, redefine work dynamics, and elevate productivity. However, within this wave of innovation lies the complexity of ethical considerations, regulatory concerns, and the potential for fragmented workforces. The integration of human and machine intelligence is no longer just a concept; it is the reality of today. In the realm of AI, every leader we collaborate with finds themselves grappling with this reality, some are diving in headfirst or dipping their toes in hesitantly. It's a shared challenge, whether they're ready for it or not. As AI becomes an integral part of our professional landscape, how can we navigate the upcoming months effectively?

Preface

As the AI wave unfolds, leaders must be equipped and ready. Leaders who grasp the multifaceted nature of AI adoption and understand its implications, will be better positioned to guide their organizations through this transformative phase. It's not merely about coping with change; it's about utilizing it as a catalyst for growth, innovation, and in turn, creating a more productive future. With an unwavering commitment to learning, adaptability, and a forward-thinking mindset, leaders can harness the power of AI to shape a brighter future for their organizations and society at large. In this paper, we delve into the difficulties and possibilities that AI poses to leaders, and offer practical strategies for them to implement. Tailored for all leaders, this guide sheds light on some of the key skills and tools necessary to navigate the AI landscape successfully.

Background

Gartner's 2018 CIO Agenda Survey points out that a mere 4% of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) have taken the plunge into AI, while an additional 46% are gearing up for the integration dance. As more businesses hop on the AI bandwagon, leaders find themselves cast as Torchbearers – not just captains of the ship but visionaries with a knack for guiding the crew effectively and fostering a culture of excellence.

Now, leadership takes centre stage in building the foundations of trust and transparency within businesses. Leaders can be seen as architects of accountability and open

communication, crafting blueprints on how decisions are made. In doing so, it is essential to uphold confidence among the public and stakeholders. In addition, leaders need to stay in the loop with ongoing learning and collaboration, riding the wave of AI advancements. They need to keep up, champion responsible practices, and ensure AI implementation aligns seamlessly with the big-picture goals of their organization, and even society as a whole. Steering towards a future where technology meets responsibility.
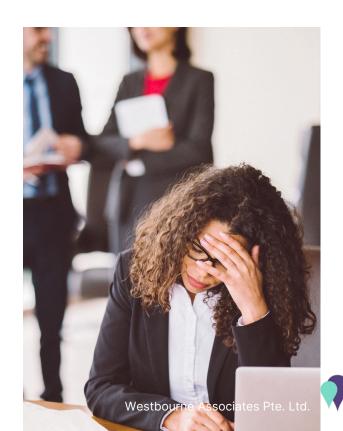
What does this mean for leaders?

It's no secret that change can be tough, especially when it comes to introducing new technologies like AI into the workplace. Some major concerns that employees have are potential job displacement due to automation of tasks, as well as steep learning curves for those who are not tech savvy. Consequently, many employees might not readily embrace the shift, and managing their reluctance could be a challenge for leaders. They are likely to encounter resistance and uncertainty during periods of significant change.

There are some critical considerations around job satisfaction, particularly if

employees feel that their concerns about the implementation of AI aren't given due consideration. In some cases, it might even become a factor contributing to turnover – a concern that's on every leader's radar.

Canva's insightful report from September 2023 shows a compelling need for support and training in generative AI due to an exponential surge in innovative generative AI-based tools. Remarkably, 65% of respondents found themselves grappling with the learning curve and over half (54%) acknowledged a sense of pressure to integrate generative AI to keep up with rapid industry changes. In addition, 47% expressed a genuine uncertainty about unlocking the full potential of this transformative technology.

Westbourne Associates Pte. Ltd.

Besides getting employees to embrace AI, attracting, retaining, and developing top talent takes on added complexity. The quest for top talent extends beyond technical proficiency, as businesses search for individuals with a forward-thinking mindset and a knack for innovation. The demand for specialized skills in AI development, machine learning, and data science becomes crucial. Retaining such talent involves creating an environment that embraces AI's potential, providing ongoing learning opportunities through professional development, mentorship, coaching, and a clear AI-focused career trajectory.

A few other areas need our attention:

Creating diverse workforces in the context of AI requires breaking down barriers in the tech industry and cultivating inclusive cultures. Beyond diversity metrics, organizations must value the unique perspectives diverse teams bring to AI projects.	Building a workforce committed to the organization's AI objectives must align individual career goals with the strategic vision of AI implementation.	Managing the physical and mental health of employees in this tech-intensive environment is key; necessitating measures that promote work-life balance, address stressors, and prioritize well-being.

These efforts not only enhance AI capabilities but also establish organizations as sought-after employers in the competitive AI talent landscape.

Why should leaders care?

It is a delicate balance... Leaders not only need to champion the benefits of AI but also ensure that the concerns and questions of their teams are heard and addressed. Whilst embracing new technology, leaders should focus on building a workplace culture where everyone feels understood and valued amid the changes.

Proactively tackling employee concerns about AI implementation isn't just good practice – it's the secret sauce for creating a workplace where everyone wants to be. When leaders take the time to truly listen and respond to the worries of their team, it plants the seeds of trust and respect. And from those seeds sprouts improved morale, where employees don't just feel like cogs in the machine but valued contributors shaping the organization's success. This has the potential to kickstart motivation, amp up collaboration, and create a feel-good atmosphere that sparks high productivity and ensure colleagues want to come to work.

But it's not just about warm fuzzies; it's strategic. This commitment to addressing concerns plays a lead role in lowering turnover rates. Employees who feel seen and supported are more likely to stick around, saving the organization the hassle and cost of constant hiring and training. With reduced levels of turnover, businesses can hold onto precious institutional knowledge, boost operational efficiency, and improve productivity. So, what might seem like a small investment in addressing concerns is actually a powerhouse move, creating a dedicated workforce that is supercharged for organizational success.

There are a few key skills that need to be honed:

Be purpose driven and define a crystal-clear vision.

The ability to think clearly under pressure, especially when the stakes are high, is critical.

The art of managing change requires leaders to cultivate resilience and the capacity to dance gracefully through ever-shifting landscapes.

Effective communication is essential, enabling leaders to steer the team with finesse and foster a culture where excellence is the north star; a continuous flow of open, honest dialogue that enhances team effectiveness.

Instilling the confidence to lead effectively and make quick, well-informed decisions.

Giving and receiving feedback can revolutionize the culture of your business.

Embracing a human-centric approach to leadership is choice that must be focused on.

The power of coaching and leadership development

As an example, before 2010, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) approached coaching reactively, in isolation and lacking accountability. Realizing the need to attract, develop, and retain talent to drive change, GSK underwent a transformative shift, reimagining coaching as a strategic tool crucial to the company's overall transformation and success. Establishing the Coaching Centre of Excellence (CoE) in 2010, GSK aimed to standardize coaching practices globally, partnering with the

International Coaching Federation (ICF) for ethical benchmarks. GSK positioned coaching as a means to unlock potential, and emphasizing success enhancement. In 2016, GSK received the ICF International Prism Award, recognizing the significant benefits of coaching. Today, coaching remains integral to GSK's talent retention, leadership, and organizational development strategy.

In companies where coaching is valued, an impressive 65% of staff are highly engaged.

Coaching is a safe, non-judgemental space, where individuals can explore the roots of their stress, figure out effective coping strategies, and get the "how-to's" to move forward. In a coaching journey, you can define specific professional or personal goals, and then leverage your unique individual strengths to break them down and move into action.

Coaching isn't a one-size-fits-all scenario. Coaches pay attention to your unique needs and dreams creating tailored, individualised sessions. With open communication channels, you can freely express concerns, seek guidance, and build confidence to move ahead. Notably, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) underscores the substantial benefits of organizations investing in personalized coaching, reporting lower turnover rates. In companies where coaching is valued, an impressive 65% of staff are highly engaged, emphasizing how this tailored support fosters a positive and fulfilling work environment.

Additionally, those in positions of leadership face huge pressures, so it is important to practise self-care. The airline safety briefings are also relevant to our daily lives - "If there is a change in cabin pressure, put on your mask before helping others."

By being in an optimal state ourselves, we can provide the best support those around us. If we are not in the right condition or headspace, how can we render help that is useful?

When we practise self-care, we have better capacities to deal with different tasks, making us more productive, calmer and effective. By engaging in self-care activities, we can help prevent burnout, which is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that can result from prolonged stress and overwork.

A tip to prioritise self-care, is to acknowledge that the mentality of "working harder, longer, and faster" leads to sickness and unhappiness; neglecting your health and balance is unsustainable. As Jiddu Krishnamurti's quote suggests, "It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society." By changing your mindset (perhaps challenging beliefs that self-care is selfish or indulgent), you can prioritise self-care.

Tips and tools for leaders

Trust Equation

Trust is at the heart of successful teams. As the leader, encourage your team to respect and support one another and foster a sense of belonging. Try adopting the Trust Equation, introduced by David Maister in his book, 'The Trusted Advisor'. The Trust Equation is a valuable tool for self-reflection and behavior guidance, essential for building and maintaining trust within your team, especially in the era of AI integration.

Providing a straightforward formula for measuring trustworthiness, the equation states that trustworthiness is the result of credibility, reliability, intimacy, all over self-orientation.

Credibility: Perceived expertise and competence built through showcasing skills, experience, and qualifications.

Intimacy: Understanding, empathy, and connection with others, demonstrated through active listening, vulnerability, and genuine care.

Reliability: Consistently fulfilling commitments and being dependable, demonstrating a reliable ability to meet expectations.

Self-Orientation: Focus on others' well-being (low self-orientation) fosters relationships, while a higher self-focus can impede trust-building efforts.

So if you keep your desire to service your own needs and drive to win low, whilst putting effort into building credibility, reliability and intimacy, the more trust you can establish in your professional relationships. You must think about these components and consciously invest in each of them. Start by brainstorming areas to develop an action plan for each of the parts of this equation. Remember, the more you invest in these trust-building components, the stronger and more resilient your team becomes.

Active Listening

Active listening is critical to build trust and foster strong team relations. By giving your undivided attention, demonstrating genuine interest, and seeking to understand others' perspectives, you create an environment that values their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Often this reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings and strained relationships. Try the 6 Active Listening Techniques by Center for Creative Leadership.

6 Key Active Listening Skills

Regular and open communication, facilitated by active listening, not only promotes a healthy work culture but also enhances productivity. Establish routine check-ins with key partners, diarizing quick catch-ups to ensure alignment and further strengthen relationships. This proactive approach not only minimizes stress but also contributes to a more collaborative and efficient team dynamic.

Psychological Safety

Exceptional leaders establish psychological safety, fostering an environment where employees feel secure enough to take risks and bring their best to work. Even in the realm of virtual collaboration, maintaining a personal touch is crucial. Schedule regular one-on-one meetings, use video conferencing for virtual interaction, and remain attentive to your team's needs, be it task-related or interpersonal. Don't hesitate to ask questions; research indicates that checking in improves mental health, demonstrating care and support. Respect boundaries but make it clear that you're available for assistance.

Moreover, to empower your team in the face of AI integration, encourage proactive involvement. Shift the narrative from a reactive stance to that of active contributors. Engage team members in projects, delegate responsibilities, and empower them to make meaningful contributions. This approach can contribute to a sense where team members feel valued and impactful in the decision-making process.
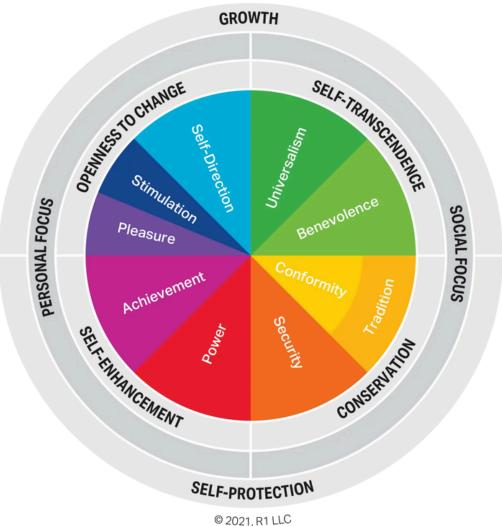
Values

Our personal values play a significant role in our relationships with others. When our values align with those around us, we establish deeper connections and foster a sense of belonging. In the collaborative landscape with AI, values serve as a common ground for understanding and cooperation, facilitating clear and effective communication among team members.

Take a moment to pause and reflect on the things that truly ignite passion and interest. Identify what brings joy and energizes you, as these are often indicators of values that resonate with your core being. By exploring your passions, you gain valuable insights into your underlying values.

Tools like the Schwartz Values Wheel can aid in naming and visualizing these core values, offering a starting point for self-discovery. Once identified, jot down your top 5 values and keep them visible as a reminder, aiding in staying aligned and focused amidst the challenges of AI integration.

Understanding and communicating these values play a vital role in shaping individual roles, making contributions more purposeful and less overwhelming.

© 2021, R1 LLC

SMARTER Goals

Create a clear direction for yourself and your team. Opt for objectives that are not only attainable but also resonate with both you and your team's aspirations and purpose. It's paramount that the overarching goal aligns with your convictions. This foundational step ensures that overarching goals align with the team's collective vision, creating a sense of purpose that serves as a powerful motivator.

Then, select assignments that are straightforward and well within the capabilities of your team, setting the stage for meaningful progress and reduced stress.

Enter the SMARTER methodology:

Specific	**Clearly defining tasks for precise focus.**
Measurable	**Identify tangible metrics for tracking progress.**
Actionable	**Break down goals into manageable steps, reducing the burden of overwhelming tasks.**
Relevant	**Align tasks with overall objectives, and each team member, including AI, to a shared purpose, to foster motivation and reduce stress.**
Timely	**Set realistic timelines for structured progress.**
Evaluate	**Regularly assess and adapt strategies for continuous improvement.**
Reward	**Acknowledging achievements, creating a positive, collaborative atmosphere that reinforces the value of each team member, human or AI.**

Incorporating these SMARTER elements into your team's approach not only enhances clarity, motivation, and productivity but also cultivates a resilient and adaptable team, well-equipped for success amidst the evolving landscape of work and AI integration.

RACI Matrix

Boost team productivity and alleviate stress by incorporating the RACI matrix with collaboration tools like Monday.com, Trello, or Asana.

Clearly define roles using the following categories:
Responsible: Task executors.
Accountable: Decision-makers overseeing task completion.
Consulted: Subject-matter experts advising during project stages.
Informed: Individuals kept updated on progress

Leverage collaboration tools to assign and track tasks. Each agenda item remains open until all associated tasks are completed, fostering transparency and accountability. Treat AI as a team member within the RACI matrix, specifying its responsibilities, for example in data analysis, automation, or decision support.

Example RACI Matrix:

Task	Team Member 1	Team Member 2	AI Assistant
Data Analysis	R	C, I	A
Task Execution	R	A	
Decisiom Support	C, I	A	R

Implementing the RACI matrix alongside collaboration tools not only streamlines workflow but also reinforces the importance of each team member, including AI, in achieving project goals.

Boundaries

Establishing clear boundaries is another fundamental strategy for enhancing team productivity and reducing stress, extending these principles to both individuals and AI. By encouraging team members to define their working hours, break times, and communication preferences, a healthier work-life balance can be achieved, ultimately contributing to overall well-being. It is also equally important to set team-wide goals, roles, and responsibilities, promoting accountability and effective teamwork.

Furthermore, defining the roles and limitations of AI within the team, alongside clear communication protocols, ensures seamless integration and optimal performance. While rules are helpful, be open to some flexibility when life happens; adaptability is key for both humans and AI.

'Fail Fast, Learn Faster' Culture

Nurture a "Fail Fast, Learn Faster" culture to uplift team productivity and alleviate stress, especially in the dynamic landscape of integrating AI. Encourage your team to see failures as stepping stones to rapid learning and improvement within our ongoing journey.

Emphasize transparent communication, creating a safe space for the team to openly share setbacks and collaboratively find solutions. Establish quick feedback loops for prompt issue identification and take a moment to celebrate the small wins along the way.

Prioritize continuous skill development to ensure the team feels confident in navigating the ever-evolving realm of AI. Embrace agile methodologies to foster adaptability, creating a resilient and continually growing team environment. This approach not only accelerates learning but also infuses positivity into our shared experiences, reducing stress amid uncertainties.

Resilience

Cultivating resilience is crucial, particularly when AI introduces new challenges. The ability to bounce back from failure and navigate uncertainties is not just a personal skill; it's a team asset that enhances productivity and reduces stress. Dr. Martin Seligman's ABCDE model is a great tool help transform negative thoughts into positive ones, fostering resilience and productivity.

Adversity:
Consider a recent challenge, like encountering difficulties in adapting to new processes or technologies.

Beliefs:
Identify any negative beliefs tied to this situation, such as thoughts like "I can't keep up with AI advancements" or "I'm not equipped for this."

Consequences:
Reflect on the actions taken due to these beliefs. Did self-doubt hinder proactive engagement with AI-related projects or opportunities

Disputation:
Challenge negative beliefs by seeking evidence to the contrary. Recall instances where you successfully contributed to AI initiatives or received positive feedback on your adaptability.

Energization:
Acknowledge the emotional impact of challenging these beliefs. Note any heightened feelings of energy, motivation, or enthusiasm as you recognize your ability to adapt and thrive in the AI landscape.

By following this process, you'll shift your focus toward positive thoughts, embracing the opportunities presented by AI integration. Embrace the challenges, challenge negative thoughts, and watch resilience become a key asset in our collective journey.

Growth Mindset

Fostering a growth mindset within the team enhances team productivity and reduces stress. The Growth Mindset, championed by psychologist Carol Dweck, emphasizes the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed with dedication and effort.

Instead of viewing AI as a threat or an insurmountable challenge, apply the growth mindset and approach AI as an opportunity for learning and growth; skills related to digital literacy and AI adaptation can be developed over time.

Encourage the team to view AI as a chance for learning and skill development. Foster a culture of ongoing skill acquisition and staying informed about new advancements. Acknowledge and celebrate the team's efforts and progress in adapting to AI technologies. When faced with setbacks, frame them as valuable learning experiences, reinforcing resilience in the face of challenges.

Dealing with Failure

When you fail, remember it is just part of the process. Through failing, we gain not only experience, but also first-hand knowledge that we can learn from. Take the time to journal and look the failure "straight in the eyes" to see what it has taught you. Change the word from failing to learning. It is amazing how changing the terminology that we use to something more positive can have such a big impact. Think about a recent learning, note
- One thing you are proud of
- Two strengths that you used effectively
- Three ways you would do it differently next time
- One thing you can do immediately to improve the current situation.

Power of the Pause

The Art of Pausing helps to cultivate strong executive presence. Embrace the art of pausing during interactions. This purposeful silence is a powerful tool, making messages clearer and more impactful. Pauses not only simplify complex information for the audience but also provide moments for thoughtful expression. Whether for dramatic effect or personal reflection, these intentional breaks create an environment conducive to clearer communication.

Practical tips include resisting the urge to rush through communication—take a deep breath, count to three, and let silence shape the conversation.

If notes are involved, strategically place "PAUSE" as a reminder. Practice this in various settings, from casual chats to formal presentations, making it a natural part of your communication style. Despite initial discomfort, the impact on the audience and the clarity it brings to your message can be remarkable.

Beyond immediate benefits, incorporating intentional pauses enhances executive presence, conveying confidence and thoughtfulness—qualities crucial in leadership, especially when discussing AI. By adopting and refining the power of the pause, leaders can navigate the challenges of the digital age, fostering effective communication, reducing stress, and promoting a more harmonious team environment.

Measuring Success

To gauge the effectiveness of coaching, one can compare task completion rates and employee engagement survey results both before and after the coaching intervention. Look for trends – are more colleagues expressing satisfaction? Do they feel heard and supported? If the engagement scores show increased positivity, that's success. Coaching contributes to this success by creating an environment where individuals are motivated, engaged, and proud of their contributions. A thriving workplace culture is a sure sign that coaching is making a positive impact.

According to research conducted by the Human Capital Institute, organizations with a robust coaching culture experience significant advantage. More specifically, over half (51%) of such organizations demonstrate higher revenue compared to similar companies lacking a similar culture. Additionally, an impressive 62% of employees within these organizations report feeling highly engaged.

Over half (51%) of such organizations (with a robust coaching culture) demonstrate higher revenue compared to similar companies lacking a similar culture.

Recommendations

Crafting effective coaching programs should align clear goals with the organization's big picture. By pinpointing areas for improvement (such as honing leadership skills, refining talents & strengths etc), and customizing coaching to fit the organization's culture is critical to ensuring it is a transformative journey.

Westbourne Associates takes pride in understanding that effective leadership development requires a tailored approach. From individual and team assessments (Hogan, Enneagram, Gallup CliftonStrengths & StrengthScope) to facilitations, leadership programs, and one-on-one coaching, Westbourne Associates is dedicated to optimizing performance and transforming how leaders navigate challenges. This comprehensive suite goes beyond the surface, offering a blend of coaching, assessments, and facilitations that are adaptable and customized to each unique context.

The coaching programs empower individuals to consistently operate at their best, enhance their leadership skills and build a confident, positive, and resilient mindset. Insightful assessments provide a foundational understanding of individual and team dynamics, contributing to the self-awareness necessary for effective leadership. Workshops and presentations, tailored to specific goals, offer practical tools addressing real-life challenges leaders face daily.

Cohort-based programs provide a structured learning environment for groups, focusing on key areas of professional development over an extended period. Mentor coaching and support for certification enhance coaching capabilities and contribute to optimising performance.

Lastly, the incorporation of the LEGO® Serious Play® method enhances leadership development by fostering creativity, team communication, and innovative thinking. This outcomes-driven approach allows leaders to understand the systemic impacts of their decisions, building a collective focus and shared outcomes within teams.

Westbourne Associates' holistic approach to coaching, assessments, workshops, cohort programs, mentor coaching, and innovative methods collectively equips leaders with the skills, mindset, and self-awareness needed to thrive in their roles, in this AI-driven landscape.

Leadership has always been a challenging journey, and now, with the arrival of AI, it's become increasingly complex. The landscape is filled with uncertainties, but one thing is clear – AI is here to stay. The sooner our leaders embrace this "new normal," the smoother their ride will be. Navigating the complexities of AI requires operating in the grey areas, where things are not just black or white. It's about finding confidence, resilience and comfort in this evolving landscape and adapting to the dynamic nature of leadership in the age of AI.

With coaching, leaders will get a tailored support system, equipping them with the tools and mindset needed to thrive in the evolving landscape shaped by AI. It's not just about coping; it's about leveraging coaching as a strategic asset to lead confidently and authentically in the AI era.

Agi Heale
CPCC, PCC & Master NLP Practitioner

WESTBOURNE ASSOCIATES

For readers seeking more information or with questions, Westbourne Associates can be contacted at info@westbourneassociates.com