

LEADERSHIPTOOLS

AI Is Your Leadership Copilot

Technology can support and enable the human touch

■ By Kim M. Catania

Let's face it: With the advancement and enhancement of technology, our world has evolved to be completely different over the past several years. At work, we've gone from old-school conference calls to virtual meetings with Teams or Zoom. There are too many social media platforms to even list and our phones have become a vital appendage in our lives.



Now, the hot topic on our minds is generative AI. Everyone seems to know a little bit about it, and many of us may be more than a little bit cautious about some future robot-led world.

What is AI in simple words? Artificial intelligence is the science of making machines think like humans. AI can do things considered “smart” that humans cannot — such as processing large amounts of data quickly.

AI can recognize patterns, make decisions and judge like humans, and AI can provide humanlike interactions with software and offer decision support for specific tasks. But it's not a replacement for humans — and won't be anytime soon.

Your AI Copilot

Setting aside the anxieties that the technology may provoke, AI offers many benefits to our lives. And, we can leverage AI to be better people leaders. In fact, think of AI as your assistant, or copilot.

As a leader, how often do you find yourself bogged down in administrative tasks, leaving little time for the crucial work of developing your team? AI is a powerful tool to alleviate this burden, allowing leaders to focus more intently on people development. AI's ability to automate routine tasks and provide actionable insights can transform the way leaders allocate their time, so you can focus on your teams.

Leaders can delegate routine tasks to AI:

- **Calendar management:** Schedule meetings, optimize time blocks and send reminders, all of which frees up hours of manual scheduling. **AI platforms such as:** [Monday.com](#); Calendar AI; Reclaim; Clockwise; Motion; SkedPal; Katch; Trevor and Scheduler AI.
- **Email management:** Prioritize emails, draft responses and filter spam, which allows leaders to focus on important correspondence and interactions. **AI-powered assistants** like Shortwave for AI-powered email search; Microsoft Copilot Pro for Outlook for improving communication; Superhuman for mixing AI generation with message templates; SaneBox for keeping your inbox organized; Mailbutler for gathering contact details and tasks.
- **Expense reporting:** Extract data from receipts, populate expense reports and submit them for approval, eliminating time-consuming paperwork. **AI platforms such as:** Expensify: Automated receipt scanning, real-time tracking; Fyle: Real-time expense tracking, policy compliance; Abacus: Automated approvals, detailed analytics; Pleo: Smart company cards, automatic categorization; Divvy: Spend management, budget control; Zoho Expense: Expense automation, multi-currency support.
- **Data entry:** Input data from various sources, such as spreadsheets and forms, reducing manual data entry errors and freeing up time for analysis. **AI platforms such as:** UiPath; Power Automate; Automator; Automation Anywhere; Blue Prism; Zapier; WorkFusion.

Leadership Connections

Leaders can leverage AI to more efficiently provide actionable insights. We'll see a growing number of applications for:

- **Talent analytics:** Analyzing employee performance data, identifying top performers and predicting potential flight risks, enabling leaders to focus on targeted development initiatives.
- **Skill gap analysis:** Comparing employee skills to organizational needs, AI can pinpoint skill gaps and recommend training programs, allowing leaders to invest in high-impact development areas.
- **Employee engagement analysis:** Analyzing employee feedback and sentiment to identify areas for improvement in company culture and engagement, enabling leaders to focus on building a positive work environment.
- **Succession planning:** Identifying high-potential employees and creating development plans, allowing leaders to focus on mentoring and coaching future leaders.
- Leaders can also implement AI to enhance people development processes, such as:
 - **Personalized learning paths:** Creating customized learning paths based on employee needs and preferences, freeing up time for leaders to provide personalized coaching and support.
 - **Performance management:** Automating routine tasks like goal setting and feedback, allowing leaders to focus on providing meaningful performance reviews and development discussions.
 - **Employee well-being:** Monitoring employee well-being indicators, such as workload and stress levels, enabling leaders to proactively address issues and support employee mental health.

By automating routine tasks and providing data-driven insights, AI empowers leaders to shift their focus from administrative duties to strategic people development initiatives. This allows them to invest more time in building strong relationships with employees, fostering a positive work culture, retaining top talent and developing future leaders.

AI Limitations and the Human Touch

While AI is a powerful tool, it's essential to recognize its limitations and understand the irreplaceable role of human leadership. In comparison to AI, wisdom is the quality with which humans leverage insight, experience, critical thinking and social and emotional intelligence to ask good questions.

Conversely, AI excels at providing answers based on enormous amounts of data and information. An insightful leader uses wisdom to ask thoughtful questions while wisely discerning the answers provided by AI.

Finally, compassion is our unique human capacity to have the intention to benefit those you are with by leading with your heart.

With AI handling routine tasks and providing valuable insights, leaders can devote more time to:

- **Empathy and emotional intelligence:** AI cannot understand and respond to human emotions.
- **Creativity and innovation:** While AI can generate ideas, it struggles with truly original and groundbreaking thinking.
- **Building relationships:** Human connection is fundamental to leadership, and AI cannot replicate the trust and rapport built through interpersonal interactions.
- **Setting vision and direction:** Leaders must articulate a compelling vision and inspire teams to achieve ambitious goals.
- **Cultivating culture:** Creating a positive and inclusive work environment requires human leadership and emotional intelligence.
- **Making ethical decisions:** Leaders must navigate complex ethical dilemmas and make choices that align with organizational values.
- **Developing talent:** Mentoring, coaching and providing development and growth opportunities are essential leadership responsibilities. Leaders must use their judgment and strategic thinking to make strategic decisions about talent development.

CONCLUSION

So, as a leader, if you leverage AI as your copilot, it can assist and augment your leadership capabilities, but it cannot replace the human element you bring to the table as a people leader. This frees up your time to focus on the uniquely human qualities that drive organizational success, and you can concentrate on what truly matters: building a high-performing, engaged workforce that achieves organizational goals.



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