TECHNOLOGY

How AI Can Make Us More Human, Not Less

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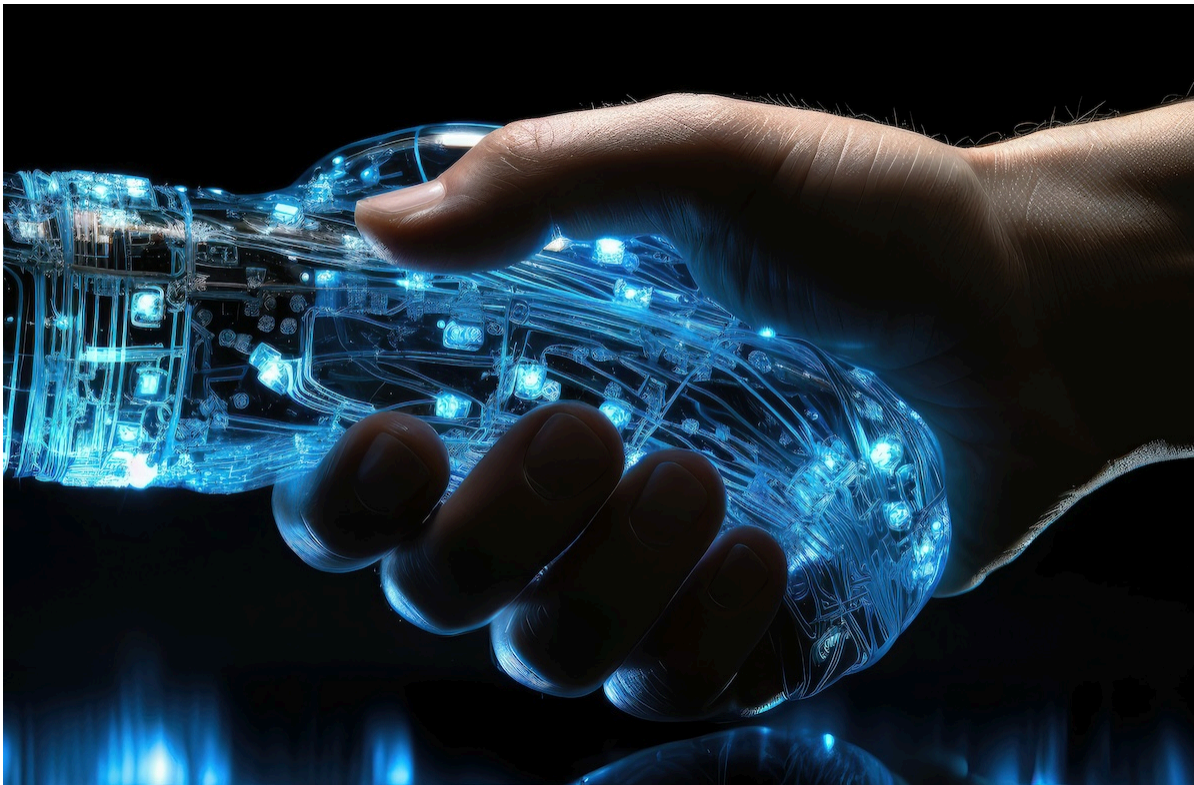

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We can create a future where AI and humans synergize rather than merely coexist.

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In boardrooms across the globe, artificial intelligence (AI) is hailed as a major key to **unlocking productivity and efficiency**. It's a seductive narrative: implement AI, cut costs, boost output. But in our rush towards an algorithmic future, we risk overlooking our greatest asset: our humanness.

When one of the authors (Eric Solomon) was a marketing leader at Instagram, he witnessed how the relentless pursuit of engagement metrics drove tremendous growth— yet also deepened anxiety and polarization across the user base. Now, with AI poised to revolutionize business, we find ourselves at a familiar crossroads.

AI adoption is accelerating rapidly. From automating routine tasks to providing data-rich insights, AI is reshaping how we work. But this sprint towards automation comes at a cost. Many organizations, in their quest for efficiency, inadvertently diminish the role of human judgment, creativity, and empathy.

The rapid adoption of AI brings significant pitfalls, such as:

1. Over-reliance on AI models for decision-making, sidelining human intuition and experience.
2. Focusing solely on quantifiable metrics, at the expense of qualitative human factors.
3. Neglecting to retrain and repurpose human talent as AI takes over mundane tasks.
4. Failing to consider the responsible and ethical implications of AI deployment.

These missteps underutilize human potential and can lead to unintended consequences, from biased algorithms to disengaged workforces. To truly harness the power of AI, we need a new approach—one that places human capabilities at the center of every AI strategy.

The Human Imperative

As AI continues to advance, the value of uniquely human skills—such as nonlinear thinking, empathetic leadership, and experiential storytelling—grows exponentially. These capabilities, which AI can only mimic but never fully replicate, represent human's most significant competitive advantage:

1. **Nonlinear thinking**: AI excels at processing vast amounts of data, but truly novel solutions often emerge from the messy, imperfect reasoning that characterizes human cognition.
2. **Empathetic leadership**: While AI can simulate empathy, it cannot transform understanding into meaningful action that connects with human emotions and motivations.
3. **Experiential storytelling**: AI can generate text, but it cannot draw from the depth of lived experience to craft compelling, authentic narratives.

Focusing on these areas ensures that our organizations remain fundamentally human-centric, leading to more innovative solutions, stronger stakeholder relationships, and a more engaged workforce. These are outcomes that pure AI implementation alone will not achieve.

A New Framework for Human-AI Collaboration

For organizations to thrive in an AI-enhanced world, the focus must shift from the allure of emerging technology to the pursuit of sustainable human outcomes. Here's how:

From Data Analysis to Creative Synthesis

As AI takes on data processing and routine tasks, human creativity should drive breakthrough innovations. AI generates options based on training data, but the nonlinear nature of human cognition excels at making unexpected connections. It's essential to preserve the unique, imperfect nuances of human reasoning that spark true creativity. Strategies might include:

- Implementing workshops where AI insights serve as catalysts for human brainstorming
- Establishing cross-functional teams that blend technical AI expertise with diverse human perspectives
- Developing programs that reward employees for discovering novel applications for AI-driven insights and use cases

From Automated Compliance to Ethical Leadership

While AI can identify ethical red flags based on predefined rules, it falls to humans to navigate complex moral tradeoffs and broader societal implications. This responsibility rests heavily on leaders, who must also possess the empathy needed to bridge the communication gaps that AI ambition can create.

Seventy-two percent of business leaders plan to integrate AI into their operations within the next few years, yet 90% of employees are concerned about AI reducing or **replacing their roles**. Their concerns are valid: A May 2024 report from IBM revealed that more than half of CEOs are pushing generative AI adoption faster than employees are comfortable with. The pressure for automated execution must be balanced with ethical leadership rooted in empathy and clear communication. Strategies might include:

- Fostering a robust AI culture that includes a clearly articulated vision, responsible and ethical guardrails, and a comprehensive communication plan for all stakeholders
- Incorporating ethical scenario planning into leadership development programs and sharing these scenarios broadly across the organization
- Training employees to balance technology with empathy, ensuring that everyone— from leadership to entry-level—can articulate the human value that complements AI capabilities

From Information Overload to Inspirational Storytelling

In today's data-driven world, many of us have been conditioned to believe that success at work means emulating machines—efficient, precise, and flawless. But **human beings are hard-wired for stories**. To thrive in an AI-driven world, we must tap into our most human abilities, and nothing is more human than storytelling. Strategies might include:

- Coaching employees on storytelling techniques to transform AI-generated insights into compelling narratives
- Using AI to identify key data points and trends, while promoting human creativity to weave these insights into meaningful stories
- Hosting storytelling sessions where employees share experiences of balancing AI efficiency with desired human-centric outcomes

The Path Forward: Cultivating Our Human Edge

As AI capabilities expand, the true differentiator for organizations will be their ability to balance algorithmic efficiency with human-centric outcomes that drive innovation and connection. This isn't about resisting automation but ensuring that productivity doesn't come at the cost of human elements that make organizations thrive.

Leaders must ask: Are we investing as much in our human edge as in AI infrastructure? Are we fostering creativity, empathy, and storytelling alongside AI? Are we measuring success in human outcomes—employee fulfillment, customer trust, societal impact—not just in efficiency gains? The most successful companies in the AI age won't just be technologically advanced; they'll be deeply human.

The AI revolution, with all its efficiency and power, may be inevitable. Yet the human revolution—the choice to embrace and elevate our innate strengths—is ours to make. By intentionally cultivating our human strengths, we can create a future where AI and humans synergize rather than merely coexist. The organizations that master this delicate balance will lead the AI age.

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