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AI and the leadership pipeline: The rising need for intentional development

How do we keep future **leadership pipelines** healthy when AI is reshaping **early career** development?

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AI is transforming work at a pace that is both exciting and overwhelming. For HR professionals tasked with shaping the workforce of the future, it also presents one of the most significant and complex workforce challenges: How to strengthen a leadership pipeline that is shrinking.

Organizations understand the importance of building healthy leadership pipelines: Our research shows that leadership potential is the top priority when assessing talent[1]. Yet, as businesses turn to AI to automate processes and increase efficiency, the impact on long-term skill development is easily overlooked.

78% of HR and talent leaders are concerned about the long-term loss of critical leadership skills[1]

AI is increasingly taking on tasks and responsibilities that have traditionally formed part of entry-level roles. Historically, these experiences have naturally supported early-career development by building critical foundational skills that would set people up for success as their career advanced. But as AI takes over components of this organic learning process, there is a growing risk that skills may not develop as naturally as they once did. Without a more purposeful approach to replacing these natural on-the-job learning opportunities, the impact could become visible in leadership skill gaps later in the career journey.

In solving for efficiency today, organizations could inadvertently create leadership skill gaps in the future.

As organizations rethink development in response, the answer isn't simply to equip people with the technical skills to work effectively with AI. Organizations also need to intentionally develop the human, transferable skills that enable people to grow, adapt and take on increasingly complex responsibilities throughout their careers. This development should begin early and continue throughout the career journey, evolving as individuals move through different roles, career stages, and levels of leadership responsibility.

By understanding which skills need cultivated at an early career level and strengthen them throughout career journeys, organizations can create more purposeful development opportunities to replace some of the learning that may no longer happen naturally through work. Without this focus, organizations risk widening skills gaps, reducing promotion readiness, and ultimately weakening the pipeline of talent ready to step into future leadership roles.

1 Talogy 2026 pulse survey

Three ways AI impacts the leadership pipeline

AI in the workplace is no longer hypothetical. The period of experimentation is giving way to widespread adoption, with our research showing that 95% of organizations report AI is now moderately or significantly automating tasks. And the impact goes beyond efficiency: according to the World Economic Forum, 39% of workers' core skills are expected to change by 2030[2].

As AI becomes embedded into everyday work, it is reshaping how people learn, develop expertise, and build experience throughout their careers. While much of the conversation focuses on productivity gains, there is a less visible challenge emerging in entry-level roles: many of the tasks AI is automating today have previously played an important role in developing the skills, judgment and confidence needed for future leadership.

1 AI is reducing traditional early professional learning opportunities

For decades, many leadership skills were developed gradually through experience. Early-career professionals learned by researching knowledge gaps, analyzing data, problem solving, preparing presentations, coordinating with colleagues, and supporting project teams. These experiences helped build critical thinking, communication, teamwork, resilience, and judgment over time.

Today, AI is increasingly capable of performing parts of these activities faster and more efficiently. While this can improve productivity, it may also reduce opportunities for employees to learn through doing. If AI becomes the primary source of answers, recommendations, and outputs, early-career professionals may have fewer chances to tackle ambiguity, work through complexity, practise problem-solving, or learn from mistakes. The result is a potential experience gap. Employees may become productive more quickly, but without careful attention, they may not build the same depth of capability that previous generations developed through hands-on work.

2 The Future of Jobs Report 2025
www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025

2 AI is increasing the value of human leadership capabilities

While AI can enhance efficiency and capability, technology alone does not determine whether AI delivers sustainable value. People remain central to how effectively, thoughtfully, and responsibly it is applied.

As our Human-AI Collaboration model demonstrates, organizations need people who can work effectively alongside AI while applying the human capabilities technology cannot replace. For leaders, this makes capabilities such as judgment, adaptability, collaboration, and the ability to understand and develop others increasingly important. Technical skills will continue to matter, but as technology evolves, they are not enough on their own. The organizations best equipped for the future will be those that invest not only in the technology they adopt, but in the transferable human capabilities their people develop across their organization.

3 AI requires a more intentional approach to developing future leaders

While human capabilities are becoming more important, some of the experiences through which they have traditionally developed are changing. As explored earlier, AI is increasingly taking on tasks that have historically helped people build skills through hands-on experience, particularly at the beginning of their careers.

This creates a double challenge for the leadership pipeline: organizations need people with strong human capabilities but can no longer assume those capabilities will develop naturally through work. Development therefore needs to become more purposeful, with today's leaders playing an important role in creating opportunities for their people to practise, apply, and strengthen the capabilities they will need as their careers progress.

We may not be able to predict exactly how roles, technologies, or ways of working will evolve. But we can identify the human capabilities that enable people to adapt, grow, and lead effectively through change. By developing these capabilities intentionally from early career through to senior leadership, organizations can help their people work effectively alongside AI today while continuing to build the leadership pipeline they will depend on tomorrow.

Growing leadership potential for an AI-enabled world

Talogy's research into the capabilities needed to succeed in an AI-enabled world brings together insights from more than 6,000 employees, managers, leaders, and talent professionals globally, alongside focus groups, interviews, and a review of academic and industry research. Across our studies[3] into early-career development, leadership effectiveness, and high-potential talent, a consistent set of human capabilities emerged.

Stronger pipelines start at the beginning of the career journey focusing on these key capabilities and evolve as people take on greater responsibility, providing a foundation for working effectively alongside AI, continuing to grow as work changes, and ultimately succeeding as a leader.

The acronym RISE represents the skills that emerged through our research that set the foundation for employees to "RISE" throughout their career in an AI world:

R — **Responsiveness** reflects the openness and agility to learn, engage with emerging technologies and adapt as work evolves.

I — **Insight** represents the ability to think critically, make sense of information and generate new ideas and possibilities.

S — **Sustainability** captures the capacity to adapt to change, remain resilient through challenge and sustain performance over time.

E — **Effectiveness** reflects the ability to communicate and collaborate to turn ideas and effort into meaningful outcomes.

Together, these human skills and capabilities form the foundation for healthy, sustainable leadership pipelines in a world where technology is increasingly powerful, but human skills remain essential.

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Hiring future-ready early talent, Talogy 2024
https://info.talogy.com/en-us/hiring-future-ready-early-talent-summary

Leading the way in the future world of work, Talogy 2021
https://info.talogy.com/en-us/leading-in-future-world-of-work

High Potential, High Impact: Insights to Build Better Programs, Talogy 2025
https://info.talogy.com/en-us/hipo-executive-summary

Responsiveness

(Responsive Curiosity)

Digital Dexterity

Digital dexterity is the openness to engage with emerging technologies, experiment with them, and integrate them into everyday work. It reflects curiosity about what technology can do and a willingness to explore unfamiliar tools.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

The most powerful technologies in history now sit quietly on our laptops and phones. Tools that once required large teams, substantial investment, and years of development can now be explored in minutes.

In this moment, the difference in human capability is not access to technology, but how we choose to engage with and use it. Digital dexterity reflects a positive and purposeful attitude towards technology: the willingness to explore new tools, understand where they can add value, and apply them effectively while continuing to adapt as they evolve.

In a world of rapidly expanding AI capability, the advantage belongs to those who remain curious those who experiment, explore, and press a little further than they did yesterday. Increasingly, digital dexterity also means helping others do the same: identifying where technology can improve how we work and leading teams to use it effectively.

Learning Agility

Learning agility is the ability to learn quickly from experience, acquire new knowledge, and apply that learning in unfamiliar situations.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

In a world where change is constant, the advantage lies with those who remain open to learning and are willing to apply new ideas. Skills that once lasted decades may now evolve far more quickly. In this environment, success belongs to those who remain curious, those who continually expand what they know and explore what they can learn next.

Learning is no longer a stage in a career; it becomes the rhythm that runs through it. Learning agility reflects a willingness not only to acquire new knowledge, but to apply it in unfamiliar situations and adapt as circumstances change. It is this orientation toward learning and growth that allows individuals to keep growing, even as the foundations beneath their work continue to shift, helping employees grow as they take on more responsibilities and progress in their career.

HOW DIGITAL DEXTERITY CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Making experimentation a habit.** Periodically trying new technologies or features helps people understand what they might make possible.
- **Looking for opportunities to apply new tools.** Experimenting with how technology might improve existing tasks or create entirely new ways of working.

HOW LEARNING AGILITY CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Reflecting after trying something new.** Learning is enhanced when people ask themselves what worked, what did not, and what they would try differently next time.
- **Learning beyond one's role.** Exploring topics and technologies outside the immediate job scope helps people expand how they think.

Insight

(Insightful Processing)

Creativity and Innovation

Creativity and innovation are the abilities to generate ideas, connect insights across domains, and apply technologies in ways that create new possibilities.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

AI can generate ideas, answers, and all forms of content at extraordinary speed. But AI does not decide which questions are worth asking, nor does it see innovation in its wider human context.

Human creativity sets the direction. It frames the challenges we choose to address, explores new possibilities, and determines which ideas deserve attention. As technology expands what can be produced, creativity becomes increasingly valuable. Leaders who rely on "what worked before" will get outpaced by those that create new approaches as the pace of change continues to accelerate. This is where early-career and entry-level employees have an advantage, to create and innovate without previous ways of working holding them back.

Creativity matters not simply because it generates ideas, but because it shapes what we choose to build, solve, and pursue. In a future where technology can produce content and solutions rapidly, human creativity will be increasingly important in framing problems, exploring opportunities, and imagining possibilities that do not yet exist. Building this skill not only provides an advantage to early-career employees now but as they progress in their career. Future leaders that value and demonstrate creativity and innovation signal to their team that questioning assumptions and proposing ideas is safe and welcome, providing a psychologically safe work environment for individuals and teams to innovate.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to evaluate information carefully, question assumptions, and form judgments grounded in evidence.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

In a world of information, the ability to critically evaluate what we read, hear, and observe has always been fundamentally important. However, as AI systems generate vast amounts of information and increasingly provide interpretations and conclusions, the nature of that challenge begins to change. We are no longer simply evaluating information; we are evaluating judgments produced by highly capable systems.

These systems can produce answers with remarkable confidence. The structure looks right, the language sounds right, and the reasoning often appears sophisticated. Yet even when something appears convincing, it may not always be correct.

When judgments are presented clearly and confidently, it becomes easier to accept them without scrutiny. In this environment, critical thinking becomes even more valuable. It allows us to question assumptions, examine reasoning, and determine whether the conclusions we encounter truly stand up to scrutiny.

Leadership decisions often are complex and there is never a clear answer. Critical thinking helps future leaders cut through information overload, resist bias and make sound decisions they can justify. It ensures they are solving the right problems, not just addressing problems quickly. Building this skill early can help mitigate individuals over-reliance on AI outputs and prepare for more impactful decision making as they progress.

HOW CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Practicing divergent thinking.** Before settling on a solution, employees could deliberately explore multiple ideas or approaches. Expanding the range of possibilities often leads to stronger outcomes.
- **Looking outside their field.** Innovation often appears when ideas from different disciplines collide.

HOW CRITICAL THINKING CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Pausing before drawing conclusions.** Creating space to reflect rather than reacting immediately to new ideas or information.
- **Looking beneath the idea.** Considering the assumptions, evidence, or reasoning that may sit behind the perspective being presented.

Sustainability

(Sustainable Evolution)

Adaptability

Adaptability is the ability to adjust behavior, thinking, and strategy as circumstances change.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

Organizations, roles, and expectations are continually evolving. The rulebooks that once guided how work was done are being rewritten at an unbelievable pace. In this environment, adaptability becomes an essential skill.

Adaptability is the ability to adjust thinking, change behavior and utilise the approach that is most attuned to the context. As the nature of work continues to evolve, the situations we encounter become more varied and less predictable. What worked previously may not work again. Adaptability allows individuals to move with change rather than resisting it.

In a world where expectations, roles, and ways of working continue to shift, the ability to evolve becomes fundamental to navigating the future of work and leadership. Leaders must constantly strive for balance with competing demands of delivering results and managing people. Building adaptability helps future leaders adjust quickly as technologies and priorities shift rather than freezing in uncertainty due to lack of knowledge or experience.

Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to sustain effort, perspective, and wellbeing during periods of uncertainty or challenge.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

Transformation introduces ambiguity, shifting expectations, and moments where the path forward is not immediately clear. Challenge and change have always been part of life. But in the evolving world of work, the speed of that change and the pace of challenge continue to increase.

Resilience is not about being unaffected by the pressures around us. It is about our ability to respond and recover, adapt to difficulty, and continue moving forward despite uncertainty. It allows individuals and teams to absorb disruption without losing direction, to overcome challenges, and to move ahead even when the path is not straightforward. Where adaptability helps people adjust to change, resilience helps them continue moving forward. Paired with adaptability, resilience is what turns a difficult situation into a course correction rather than stalling or breaking down.

HOW ADAPTABILITY CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Treating change as exploration.** Asking what opportunities a shift might create rather than what it disrupts.
- **Being willing to adjust the approach.** Trying different methods over time strengthens the ability to respond when circumstances shift.

HOW RESILIENCE CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Reframing setbacks as part of growth.** Challenging moments often reveal what can be learned, adjusted, or improved.
- **Maintaining perspective during change.** Stepping back to reflect can help sustain clarity, focus, and forward momentum.

Effectiveness

(Effective Collaboration)

Communication

Communication is the ability to express ideas clearly, interpret information accurately, and translate complex insights into shared understanding.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

Communication bridges the gap between technological output and human action. It ensures ideas are understood, decisions are informed, and knowledge moves effectively through teams and organizations.

In the age of AI, communication also extends beyond human interaction. It includes the ability to interact effectively with technology itself. Whether communicating with colleagues, direct reports or intelligent systems, the principle remains the same: understand the audience and convey information in a way that enables understanding and action.

At the same time, the human element of communication will become even more important. People increasingly look for authenticity in what people say, wanting to hear genuine perspective, intention, and meaning. Effective communication is therefore not only about clarity, but also about credibility and connection. It is our authentic voice that allows ideas to build trust and bring people with us. A leader's communication skills turn a leader's ideas, and decisions into action, gaining team buy-in by explaining not just decisions but the reasoning behind them, including listening as much as speaking. Even if entry-level employees are using AI in their roles, their ability to communicate with technology, explaining their thought process and providing their unique perspective on situations provides an opportunity to build critical human communication skills.

Teamwork

Teamwork is the ability to work alongside others to achieve shared outcomes. It involves combining individual strengths, perspectives, and experiences to solve problems and make progress that would be difficult to achieve alone.

Why it matters for building leaders in the age of AI

AI may amplify what individuals can do, but meaningful progress is still created by people working together. Technology can generate insights and expand individual productivity, but it is through human collaboration that ideas are translated into outcomes that matter.

Teams bring together different skills, experiences, and perspectives. This collective capability allows organizations to develop solutions that are stronger, more balanced, and more practical than any individual contribution alone. In many ways, teams have always been greater than the sum of their parts.

In an age of AI, effective teamwork is not only about collaborating with other people, but also about understanding how human strengths combine with technological capability to create value. The most effective teams and leaders will be those that understand how to bring people, perspectives, and technology together to achieve more than any one part could achieve alone.

HOW COMMUNICATION CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Simplifying the complex.** Practicing explaining ideas in ways others can quickly understand.
- **Asking clarifying questions.** Making sure everyone shares the same understanding before moving forward.

HOW TEAMWORK CAN BE DEVELOPED:

- **Focusing on shared goals.** Aligning individual contributions around what the team is trying to achieve together.
- **Building on each other's strengths.** Recognising what different people bring and use those strengths to move the group forward.

Human skills and qualities for stronger AI-Era leadership pipelines

Human skills and qualities:		Why it matters to the leadership pipeline
Responsive: Responsive Learning	Digital Dexterity	Future leaders who can confidently explore emerging technologies and help others use them effectively as work evolves.
	Learning Agility	Future leaders who continually learn, grow, and apply new knowledge as the skills and expectations required of them change.
Insightful: Insightful Processing	Creativity and Innovation	Future leaders who can challenge established thinking, identify new possibilities, and create direction as AI transforms what is possible.
	Critical Thinking	Future leaders who can navigate complexity, challenge assumptions, and make sound, evidence-based decisions rather than simply accepting AI-generated answers.
Sustainable: Sustainable Evolution	Adaptability	Future leaders who adjust their thinking and approach as technology, roles, and organizational priorities continue to change.
	Resilience	Future leaders who can maintain perspective and forward momentum through uncertainty, setbacks, and sustained periods of change.
Effectiveness: Effective Collaboration	Communication	Future leaders who can turn complex information and decisions into shared understanding, trust, and action as ways of working evolve.
	Teamwork	Future leaders who can bring together diverse people, perspectives, and technology to create stronger collective outcomes.

The future of work will not be defined simply by machines becoming more capable. It will be defined by how humans choose to work alongside them, and each other.

To thrive in the age of AI, future leaders must learn to RISE to remain responsive in curiosity, insightful in judgment, sustainable in the face of change, and effective through collaboration.

AI expands possibilities but human skills determine what happens in reality.

Emotional Intelligence and Values: A strong anchor for future leaders

As people progress through their careers and take on greater leadership responsibility, the demands placed upon them also change. Decisions become less clear-cut, competing priorities increase and the consequences of their choices extend beyond their own performance. Leaders must balance the needs of their people with organizational objectives, influence across increasingly diverse stakeholder groups, navigate upwards as well as downwards, and provide clarity for others when they may not have all the answers themselves.

At the same time, the context in which people are progressing towards leadership is changing. Roles and career pathways are evolving, expectations around work continue to shift, and AI is accelerating changes to how work gets done. Change requires energy and resources to navigate and can affect how people make sense of their work, their contribution and their future. Throughout history, periods of transformation have often created uncertainty around identity, meaning, and direction. The scale and pace of AI-driven change may intensify those pressures even further.

The human skills that help individuals to RISE throughout their careers cannot be viewed simply as isolated skills. Beneath these capabilities sit deeper psychological foundations that shape how individuals respond to uncertainty, relationships, and change. As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated, not only will human skills be increasingly important, but the biggest challenge leaders face will reflect deeply human questions. As early career professionals influence and responsibility grow, they will not only need to navigate disruption themselves, but they also need to help other people navigate it. The more senior the individual becomes, the more critical these foundational qualities become.

Across psychological research, values and emotional intelligence consistently emerge as important foundations underpinning effective human behavior. These qualities influence not only how individuals apply their skills, but also how they interpret situations, make decisions, respond under pressure, and engage with others.

As the age of AI continues to reshape work, this deeper human layer becomes increasingly important. Technological change does not simply alter tasks and workflows; it can also challenge people's sense of identity, contribution, and meaning within organizations. In environments characterised by continual change and ambiguity, individuals are increasingly pulled in competing directions. What helps people remain grounded are the internal foundations that shape both why they act and how they behave.

Why your approach to developing future leaders matters

As organizations navigate the rapid technological changes that AI will bring, the way they measure and develop future leaders becomes increasingly important.

In reality, many organizations don't yet have a clear or consistent view of the leadership capability and potential that exists across their workforce. Data is often fragmented, based on self-report, or inferred from roles rather than truly measured. This is where a more structured, science-based approach becomes valuable.

Many of the human capabilities that underpin future leadership performance are complex and not always directly observable. These capabilities are often supported by deeper psychological foundations, including cognitive ability, personality traits, values, and motivational drivers.

Science-based assessment methods provide a reliable way to understand these foundations. Psychometric and behavioral assessments can help identify patterns in how individuals think, learn, and interact, offering insight into both current capability and future growth potential. By measuring these underlying components, organizations can develop a more accurate view of the capabilities and potential that exist across their workforce. This helps them identify strengths, anticipate future capability gaps, and guide investment in leadership development to maintain a healthy leadership pipeline in the long run.

In this way, science-backed skills measurement becomes more than an evaluation exercise. It provides a foundation for smarter leadership pipeline decisions, helping organizations understand the capabilities that exist at every level of their workforce, identify potential early, and purposefully develop the future leaders they will need.

Values

provide the 'why' behind human behavior. They shape our identity, influence decisions, and help individuals remain aligned to principles that create consistency, and purpose. As AI becomes embedded in more workplace processes, leaders play an important role in ensuring how it is used reflects organizational values and protects the human experience. Leaders with a strong understanding of their own values and leadership identity are better equipped to set meaningful guardrails, balancing what technology can do with what it should do.

Emotional intelligence

shapes the 'how' of effective human capability, reflecting the ability to understand and manage emotions, navigate interpersonal dynamics and regulate behavior under pressure. As technology takes on more of what organizations do, emotional intelligence becomes increasingly important in how leaders bring people with them. AI can enhance how work gets done, but it cannot replace the empathy and human connection people need from their leaders to effectively perform and collaborate.

Talogy's international leadership research, conducted with 1,950 respondents across employee, leader, and organizational perspectives, found that employees increasingly expect more human-centered leadership and identified emotional intelligence as important for navigating change and supporting people through increasingly complex environments.

Building strong leaders is particularly important during these times, as they can help shape how uncertainty is interpreted within organizations. In times of transformation, employees increasingly look to leaders not simply for direction, but for reassurance and emotional steadiness.

As AI systems become increasingly sophisticated, these deeply human qualities may become even more valuable. Technology can automate tasks, generate insights, and accelerate productivity, but it cannot fully replicate human judgment, emotional understanding, ethical reasoning,

In this sense, the future of work will not simply depend on how effectively organizations adopt AI. It will depend on how effectively they strengthen the human capabilities and deeper psychological foundations that allow technology to be applied wisely, responsibly, and meaningfully.

Human-centered guidance for an AI-powered future

Talogy assessments, development programs, and consulting support help you build and maintain a future-ready leadership pipeline–enabling agile, creative, and future-confident leaders and teams.

Your business, your people, our support

Many organizations are investing heavily in AI, but far fewer have a clear understanding of the human skills needed to make it effective. Going beyond technical skills means not only identifying and measuring the skills that machines can't automate but also aligning them to your organization's needs. This means you aren't just designing your workforce to adapt to AI, you're empowering each employee to grow with AI. Our consulting experts work with you to design, implement and evolve practical skills-based strategies focused on accelerating human potential and business results.

Understanding who people are, not just what they can do

Stronger and more resilient leadership pipelines start with a deeper understanding of people at all seniority levels. Future performance is grounded in transferable skills that enable individuals to grow as roles evolve, not only technical capabilities.

Talk to Talogy to strengthen the human skills that keep your leadership pipeline ahead in an AI era

Talogy's assessment solutions measure not only what an employee can do, but their capacity to adapt to change, take on new challenges, and master new skills. Our robust assessments provide insights into vital transferable skillsets at every step of the career ladder, such as building relationships and learning agility, as well as a comprehensive picture of someone's skills foundations, such as their personality traits, cognitive ability, values, and emotional intelligence.

Empowering the potential to grow

Talogy helps mobilize and maximize your talent by supporting targeted development, succession planning, internal mobility, and upskilling aligned with a technology innovation and your business goals.

We provide the insights needed to identify the gaps, strengths, and opportunities you have today while building the future capabilities your employees will need to lead tomorrow.

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Early career hiring and development | Potential identification and development | Leadership selection and development

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