

Guild



A practical framework for getting started with AI-driven workforce transformation

How to start unlocking the synergy between AI and skilling for your workforce to drive the future of work

Introduction

Organizations are used to workforce transformations that require new skills, jobs, and career pathways. Nothing we haven't seen before. But with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), the pace of change and the scale of disruption that organizations face is unprecedented.

All leaders are eager to leverage AI for efficiencies that affect their bottom line, but HR leaders in particular are uniquely positioned to determine how the technology will be integrated broadly across the workforce — driving the most significant changes that'll be felt throughout the organization.

For these HR leaders, this guide offers a practical framework to start making data-driven decisions on integrating AI and reskilling or upskilling your workforce to meet this moment of AI-driven transformation. It'll help you think through key questions, identify the most efficient ways to augment your workforce, and start building a plan.



Temperature check: quick-hit stats

#1

Boards of directors cite [business disruptions due to skills shortages](#) as the number one workforce risk to growth in 2024 and 2025.

86%

Of HR leaders surveyed, 86% [haven't implemented strategic workforce planning](#) efforts, despite it being a top priority.

9%

Just 9% [of board members](#) are very confident that their companies are effectively upskilling and reskilling employees for an AI future.



Aligning on key questions

You're probably already asking yourself:

- How much will AI impact teams across my business?
- Which roles will be impacted by AI automation or experience productivity gains from AI augmentation?
- What upskilling and reskilling do my employees need?
- How do I provide the right upskilling and reskilling?
- How do I mobilize employees into their next opportunity?

These questions in turn bring key leaders to consider implications of AI through their unique lenses:



CHROs and people executives are thinking anew about annual workforce planning and accounting for complex organizational shifts. They're asking: What are the strategic business decisions that need talent support? What technology is available and how do they leverage it at scale? Does their workforce have the skills needed to weather this disruption and grow?



L&D leaders are attuned to skilling to withstand disruption. Skills to keep pace with business needs are in short supply and are ever-changing. These executives look at skill gaps across business units, evaluating new skilling solutions within a cost-conscious environment. Their goal is to be relevant and effective while understanding how AI can be leveraged by different departments.



Benefits leaders meanwhile, are thinking about attracting and retaining talent with the right total rewards offerings — including skilling programs for an AI-centric future. They know it's not enough to stay up to date; benefits must be budget-friendly and aligned to organizational strategy.

For everyone, the stakes are great — but so are the opportunities.

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How to think about transformation: creating a circuit between skills and tasks

Skills tend to be at the forefront of the conversation around talent transformation. Traditionally, HR leaders prepare for workforce transformation through skills mapping exercises — a highly manual process. These efforts are designed to identify skills gaps and pinpoint capabilities needed for priority roles, but they often rely on limited data at best, gut reaction at worst.

To avoid the time and toil, many HR leaders are actually using AI to make skills mapping easier, more comprehensive, and more automated. That's important, but not enough. Mapping skills taxonomies is not in itself a plan — and, critically, it does not predict the impact that AI will have on roles today.

To best understand the day-to-day, tangible impact AI will have on your workforce, you must look past job descriptions and beyond skills. You must examine the work itself.



A unit of measurement for work

When examining the potential impact of AI, it's essential to look at how skills are applied across individual jobs — and how they manifest in the most incremental way. And for that, we turn to tasks.

Jobs are just containers for a collection of tasks, ranging from tedious to creative, with a high level of human touch to none needed at all. And when we look closely at the tasks that someone does, it reveals not only how the work itself is getting done but also the opportunities at the task level for AI augmentation or automation. Tasks are the increment where workflow change can unfold.

Pulling in skills as a fast-follow

This naturally opens the door for upskilling and reskilling. Time freed up, thanks to AI augmentation or automation of certain tasks, can be reallocated to addressing the skills gaps you've identified. And with this, a new circuit of AI-driven transformation can whirl into motion — with tasks benefiting from quick-win AI efficiencies and new skills driving more agility and innovation for the organization.

For leaders trying to help their employees take advantage of the power of AI today and prepare for AI-resilient roles in the future, focusing the lens on tasks lets us understand and quantify the opportunity.

The 3 initial boxes to check for transformation

HR leaders should own and pilot this transformation for their organizations, and this means HR teams should be more execution-oriented with a test-and-learn mindset. You won't have to go from zero to sixty; HR leaders can leverage an AI tool to guide them. (More on this shortly.) But you still have to be prepared. To enable swift decision-making, review these three initial check boxes for workforce transformation.

☑ Understand the opportunities to increase efficiency across your business through AI.

The adoption of AI has the ability to impact tasks differently, and there are two primary use cases for AI:

Augmentation = increased productivity on a specific task once AI is embedded in the role

Automation = a task can be handled independently or mostly independently by AI



Certain roles in your organization have opportunities for **AI augmentation**. Tasks AI is likely to augment generally involve:

→ **Complex decision making**

→ **Analytics and insights**

→ **Personalization**

Think about tasks like project planning, predictive modeling, analyzing customer behavior, coding, and so on. When trained accordingly, people in these jobs will be able to leverage AI to be more productive.

Other tasks may become fully **automated by AI** in the coming years, and almost every role has the opportunity to make room for more human-centric work by automating tasks that are:

→ **Standardized**

→ **Highly repetitive**

→ **Rule-based**

Think about tasks like data entry, basic customer service requests, scanning items, processing payments, and so on. AI upskilling is helpful in the short term to improve efficiency in their current jobs, while longer term reskilling can help employees move into other in-demand roles.

☑ Know what to look for in an AI tool.

The right AI tool should provide leaders with access to custom insights and data to drive their people and business forward in a way that uniquely suits their needs.

An effective AI tool to drive workforce transformation should:

→ **Enable strategic workforce planning through data-driven decision making:**

Business unit, role-specific, and job task-level data showing the forecasted impact of automation and augmentation will help your business discern where to focus.

→ **Provide customized and actionable recommendations:**

Once impact is quantified, the tool should provide a tailored list of programs best aligned to address impending skills gaps.

→ **Drive operational efficiencies while enabling employee growth:**

Freeing employees from repetitive tasks enables them to use more critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

→ **Future proof the business and mitigate risk:**

Ongoing skills recommendations help leaders keep their organizations competitive by shaping a future-ready workforce that is adaptable, continuously skilling, and ready for the opportunities AI provides.

☑ Prepare to implement with agility, continuously.

The follow-through on transformation will only happen when employees at every level of the organization have access to the curated learning programs to help them develop and apply in-demand skills. This is where you can finish the swing for lasting (and ongoing) workforce transformation. The organizations that get it right set themselves up to be agile, innovative, and prepared to harness the potential of AI to supercharge their business.

Of course, change management will play an important role in this work. And if you can shift your perspective to one of always-on change management — and adopt a continuous-transformation culture — you'll be among the select few organizations enjoying the rewards that come with this dynamic and agile posture. Listen to experts from Guild and The Josh Bersin Company talk through the latest research supporting strategy and change management for AI-driven workforce transformation in our [on-demand webinar](#).

Connect with one of Guild's experts to learn about *Guild Transform*, which helps leaders quantify the impact of AI on their workforces and recommends a plan of action.

[Connect with us](#)

Core components for an effective skilling strategy

It cannot be understated: The motor for successful workforce transformation is reliant on your skilling strategy. And successful execution of your upskilling and reskilling plan comes down to agility and proven outcomes — particularly around internal talent mobility.

The latter is crucial if your organization is in cost-conscious mode, as many are. Your education and skilling investments need to have proven ROI to get buy-in.

There are three core components of a skilling strategy that drive agility and outcomes.

01. Access to high quality, data-backed learning programs that deliver outcomes for employees and employers.

For education and skilling programs to drive real outcomes in the form of vertical and lateral career growth, they must align with business goals and the unique learning needs of your workforce.

That's not going to happen with 10-minute video modules, nor with an endless range of options from schools and learning providers that haven't been scrutinized for learning outcomes. It's also not going to happen with programs that aren't designed for working adults.

Criteria for selecting a best-in-class learning and skilling solution:

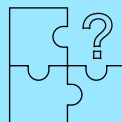
- **Quantifiable learner outcomes** in the form of persistence and completion rates, earnings after graduation, job placement data, and more. Your learning partner should be able to prove superior outcomes for the metrics that matter to your employees' success.
- **A range of vetted programs** should be offered to meet not only the strategic needs of your organization, but also the needs of your employees. This starts with foundational programs like English language learning and high school completion, and spans from short-form programs (like certificates and bootcamps) to bachelor's and master's degrees.

→ Continued innovation and expansion:

Skilling offerings should innovate to meet new business needs, [such as AI and machine learning](#), as well as make skills acquisition increasingly accessible and efficient.

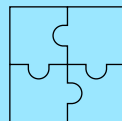
Case study

The right learning programs create pathways to frontline management



The challenge:

Despite a wealth of talent, many of Guild's retail partners were struggling to fully staff team leadership and store management roles.



The solution:

Guild tapped into its network of innovative learning partners — working with Bellevue University and the University of Denver — to identify and co-create new skilling solutions for frontline management and leadership.

The impact:

Thousands of frontline workers have completed the programs and gained valuable new skills that align them with growth opportunities into leadership and management roles.

[See the case study to learn more.](#)

02. Nimble curation of business-critical skills and the program recommendations for your workforce to gain them.

Your learning and skilling partner must be agile enough to adapt to your organization's priorities today while continuously evaluating progress and outcomes — reassessing as often as necessary. As such, a worthy partner should proactively evolve its program catalog to meet business needs.

Testimonial

How Guild partnered with SNHU to craft practical AI coursework for working adults

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) is designing AI learning for working adults — and Guild is helping to identify and fill learning gaps for employees.

“Guild's insights really helped us at SNHU define what the products were, what the learning experiences were that we would bring to market for AI. So in thinking about what employers wanted, Guild came back to us as a learning partner and said, these are the places where there are gaps and where there is real need for specific learning. Those are the experiences that we at SNHU created.”

Alana Burns

Chief Marketing Officer
Southern New Hampshire University

For example, two important skill sets that are especially relevant now and should be accessible to your workforce include [AI skills](#) and [durable skills](#).

Durable skills are particularly valuable in moments of change. They are the foundational skills for an individual's productivity and upward mobility, and they have a longer shelf life than technical skills.

AI skills are the other half of the equation. Make sure your AI skilling investment offers programs that cover the fundamentals, AI in practice, and AI strategy for leadership.

03. The mechanism to mobilize your workforce at scale.

To tackle workforce transformation, you need one more critical component in your skilling strategy, and that's the structure and support to translate skills into mobility and talent pipelines, including:

→ Data to drive talent pipelines:

Visibility into which employees are completing which programs can inform outreach to potential job candidates. It can also be helpful to see program performance, including the most popular programs among employees. Further, leaders can use data like participation and persistence rates to identify employees who are ready for mobility.

→ Specialized support and coaching:

Make sure employees have personalized guidance in the form of dedicated growth and career coaches who can provide motivational support alongside career discovery and navigation assistance.

→ Career pathways:

Priority pathways — where there are clear education and skilling programs that can lead to new roles — makes it easy for employees to explore their program choices and find the roles that align with both *their* interests and *your* priorities.

Your skilling strategy can guide people to these roles — including the programs that support them — and make pathways visible, while marketing these options to create broader awareness.

Conclusion

Moments of transformation are moments of opportunity. When you're able to identify where and how to augment your workforce, build a plan for upskilling and reskilling, as well as execute on that plan in an agile, efficient way, you can set up your organization — and your people — to adapt and grow.

Ready to get started with talent transformation?

Guild is a workforce transformation partner innovating at the intersection of the future of work and learning. We've launched a new tool to guide your AI-driven workforce transformation.

Connect with us to learn more or visit guild.com/transform.



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