



The emerging role of manager in a world of AI

By Marlene Chism

The question keeps popping up on social media: How will artificial intelligence affect the role of manager? Will AI eliminate the need for managers altogether? Artificial intelligence will not eliminate the role; however, the role will transform and require human intelligence skill sets.

Partnering Leadership podcast host and CEO adviser Mahan Tavakoli shared his insights after interviewing dozens of AI experts: "The traditional functions of management are either enhanced or virtually eliminated by AI — for example, controlling, planning, staffing and organizing. AI can monitor performance, predict future trends, streamline recruitment, aid in training and optimize team structure. AI cannot replace human connection. It will be even more critical in the future to equip organizations with leaders who know how to inspire, connect and build trust."

In essence, the more we adapt to artificial intelligence, the more we need human intelligence as a function of management. This post explores three human intelligence skills managers of the future need to acquire.

Skill No. 1: Self-regulation

According to the American Psychological Association, self-regulation is the control of one's behavior through the use of self-monitoring (keeping a record of behavior), self-evaluation assessing the information obtained during self-monitoring and self-reinforcement — for example, rewarding oneself for appropriate behavior, or course-correcting ineffective behavior.

Why it's important: The brain is wired to want certainty, and when humans perceive extreme uncertainty, the brain short circuits to protection mode. Uncertainty is the fear that gives rise to all other fears. The more uncertainty, the more inner conflict is created in the brain. The more inner conflict, the more outer conflict employees experience due to the inability to maintain regulation.

Instead of innovating, producing, collaborating and creating, humans focus on survival. Protection takes front and center stage as long as fear is the driving force. With the rise of uncertainty and unregulated change due to AI, the self-regulated leader adds a layer of security by dialing up emotional certainty in an unstable work environment.

Skill No. 2: Storytelling

Storytelling is the ability to frame a narrative, speak to the vision and redirect negative interpretations that cause disruption and division. As it relates to business, storytelling involves utilizing narratives to effectively communicate and establish connections with various stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, partners and others associated with your organization. It goes beyond performance or entertainment and instead serves a distinct purpose to achieve intended outcomes.

Why it's important: In narrative coaching, I learned two ideas that have served me well in my practice:

Our stories are the source of our suffering.

New behaviors require new stories.

Leaders in the future need to be aware of language and behaviors that indicate potential disruption. A leader that understands the art of storytelling distinguishes between stories that cause division and stories that create unity. In addition, leaders can identify pain points, potential mental health issues and potential conflict at the root of the problem rather than after the fact.

Skill No. 3: Coaching

Coaches do many things. They teach, support, ask questions, demonstrate and offer guidance. Coaches do not micromanage or use power and authority to get work done. At its core, coaching entails supporting individuals in enhancing their own performance, essentially facilitating their learning process. While a manager might tell an employee what to do, a coach helps facilitate critical thinking and learning to equip the employee with both skills and good judgment.

Why it's important: Critical thinking and wisdom top the list when it comes to future skill development. With the advancement of AI, it's important to understand that machines don't feel and don't have empathy. At its core, AI is a prediction tool to aid in decision-making, but decision-making without a human touch is a danger to society.

According to business consultant and leadership trainer Art Petty, "We need to reconsider the titles we give to managers, because labels create meaning. The future leaders will need to be called coaches, mentors or trainers, because this is more accurate of their role in the emerging world."

Management as we know it is transforming into a new paradigm and new definition. Gone is the top-down, checklist type of management. Gone is the practice of promoting people to a management position because of their seniority or technical skills. The old way of supervising and managing will make way for a transformed model of mid-level leadership that is rooted in human intelligence.

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