



AI360 podcast

Season 1, Episode 9: The implications of Generative AI in the workplace

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Rohan Gupta: Hello, everyone. And welcome to another episode of AI360. I'm your frequent host, Rohan, and I'm very excited to be joined by Laura today, who's going to talk to us about the workforce implications of Generative AI. Laura, welcome to the show. Do you mind introducing yourself?

Laura Shact: Absolutely. Thank you for having me. My name is Laura Shact, and I'm a principal at Deloitte Consulting. I co-lead our AI practice for Human Capital. I live in Silicon Valley, and I have advised leading tech and media companies for almost two decades on talent strategy. These companies have often been at the cutting edge of new technologies, and GenAI is no different. Over the last 12 to 18 months, I've had more and more involvement with companies on this topic on GenAI, as it's become apparent that these shifts are going to have generational impact on the way that we define and accomplish work.

Rohan Gupta: Super interesting. So Laura, I know the topic for today is workforce implications, but could you just explain what that means to our audience?

Laura Shact: Sure. There's really three buckets. First is the human resources organization. So we've been working with leaders across HR and people organizations to determine how to automate or augment HR processes like talent acquisition, job architecture, learning, content development. So it's those experiences that then impact the day-to-day life of a workforce as an end user. The second is around workforce strategy. So that's understanding the impacts to skills and workflows that people use every day at work and how that rolls up to influence the roles that you need in your organization. So think of things more like dynamic workforce planning or restructuring organization design and talent strategy. And last, but most urgently, GenAI adoption. So that includes the immediate upskilling we see organizations going through as they want to share what is GenAI, how to use it, communication about new tools and processes, and how to lead with trust during turbulent times.

Rohan Gupta: That's incredibly interesting. And by the way, I love that you use the word adoption. That's actually come up several times in client conversations for me as well. So when we're talking about adoption, what kind of responsibilities do organizational leaders have in driving adoption?

Laura Shact: There are really several. So much of adoption and culture change comes from leaders effectively setting and communicating a vision and then modeling the behaviors that they want to see. So as a bit of a shameless plug, in our recent "GenAI and Future of Work" piece, we shared a few things to keep in mind, and this is what I see the most successful organizations doing. It's visibly committing to GenAI strategy. It's championing the benefits of GenAI, openly discussing concerns and resistance that exists in their organization, fostering a safe environment for experimentation and for learning, and implementing guidelines and governance for Generative AI usage. So one of the core themes I've seen come up time and time again in our research is building trust with your workforce. And that's always been important, but it feels especially important right now.

Rohan Gupta: Do you mind expounding a little bit on the idea of trust? Why is it so important? And how should leaders build that culture of trust?

Laura Shact: The data tells us that when engagement and trust are high, 77% of individuals view advanced technology in a positive light. But on the flip side, employees perceive their employers as being 188% less empathetic and less human when they know that AI tools are being used. So that might be surprising for some of us early adopters. But think about one's reaction in realizing that an image is AI generated or that they're talking to an automated support desk within their own company and from their own leaders. And when we think about trust, we really have four different dimensions we think about it: along humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability. So what does that mean? When it comes to AI, we should make sure workers understand AI and see it as an opportunity to improve their own outcomes and well-being, not just as a threat to their job. And they need to understand and see that it's a value to them. Workers need to have the opportunity to co-create. So engage in experiments, provide feedback, and access important information about GenAI tools. And you need to make sure your AI tools are capable—that they deliver on their promise, they're unlikely to result in unethical responses or behavior hallucinations, and they actually do help employees get their work done. And then, before you roll out anything broadly, ensuring that those tools are tested and validated and that the messaging is in line with your GenAI vision.

Rohan Gupta: Makes a lot of sense. I know you talked about the research that we've done, which we'll make sure to include in the show notes. I've also read from our research and from others, that GenAI will likely impact a large majority of roles in the coming years. So, how should companies prepare for this? Is it upskilling? What should they do about it?

Laura Shact: Well, it's not one and done, and it's likely just starting in the year 2024. The technology is improving so rapidly, and it's likely to impact different business models, different times. So we're all going to be upskilling ourselves for a long time. In the immediate term, I work with companies to define various learning personas and then develop curriculum around them. So typically we think about four personas: the executives, the leaders and managers, nontechnical business professionals, and then technical business professionals. So the key there is providing the courses and the learning that's most relevant to them. And so these groups aren't overwhelmed, but see it as giving them access to opportunities and access to more learning if they want it. Within Deloitte, we offer an AI academy to build these schools, and I see a lot of companies also developing their own courses or enrolling people in technical bootcamps, especially in areas like data science, for more upskilling on the technology.

Rohan Gupta: So, Laura, as we sign off, maybe you could just give us one recommendation. What should organizations be thinking about as they prepare their workforces for Generative AI?

Laura Shact: I'm a huge proponent of developing a researcher's mindset. That's a little different from a learner's mindset. It means working towards a culture of experimentation and bringing in workers to co-create, really, and learn in the process. Let me give you one example. Within Deloitte, we recently ran a "prompt-a-thon." Yes, it's like a hack-a-thon, but when we talk about GenAI—a prompt-a-thon. And we ran that within one of Deloitte's community groups. It was where we brought together team members and multiple teams across different levels to develop a solution to serve our clients using one of our own GenAI tools currently in testing. We got some amazing pitches, and we're now sharing those product ideas with different offering leaders and getting participants involved in AI, business development and projects.

So I think of that. That's a win-win-win for everyone. But no matter what, I think the most important thing is to remember that the workforce is the heart of your business. Set clear vision and be human-centered in how you design, prioritize, and implement GenAI solutions. After all, AI may not replace humans, but humans using AI will certainly replace humans without it.

Rohan Gupta: I heard that one before. Laura, thanks so much for being part of AI360. We look forward to having you back in the months ahead.

Laura Shact: Thank you.

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