

Generative AI is changing the way work is facilitated, managed, and done; transforming workflows, communications, and insights; and driving the need for organizations to manage workforce perceptions around new digital infrastructure, trust frameworks, and data governance models.

Succeeding Across the Human Experience of Introducing, Promoting, and Using GenAI

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Defining a Future with GenAI

AI is advancing digital transformation beyond process automation to include insights-driven actions personally curated for individual workers. Business priorities for AI use cases center on improving employee and operational productivity as more than 40% of companies are deploying AI resources to better optimize employee workloads (source: IDC's *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 9, September 2023*).

While business drivers identified by the CEO's office motivate the bulk of AI use cases, HR leads the effort to build employee listening insights into governance and data-level context into the design of objectives and key results (OKR). Employee listening insights already reveal executive, manager, and employee concerns around automated personalization and suggestive resourcing driven by AI and GenAI even when both make it easier and more efficient to drive toward more valuable achievements at work.

The CEO's push to leverage AI for business efficiency and productivity is matched by HR's effort to build employee goals, needs, and priorities into AI resourcing frameworks. Translating executive goals for the workforce is driving HR to concentrate on personalized employee experiences that individualize resourcing and enablement based on a worker's goals, roles, interests, and concerns. Employee listening is foundational to making AI personalization a reality, but its infusion into AI models is another story.

IDC has found that while more than 60% of employees actively participate in employee listening in the early stages of building a more responsive organization, they are 36% more likely to be wary of how their contributed data is used once they actively see personalization at work (source: IDC's *Human Resources Survey, June 2023*).

AT A GLANCE

As HR seeks to balance the needs of the business with the concerns of the workforce, expanded use of employee listening is proving valuable to engineer success with expanded AI frameworks. Employee listening supports efforts by HR leaders to convey behavioral roadblocks around AI adoption, leading to better aligned and supported communications, governance, and accountability frameworks across promotion, adoption, and use.

KEY STATS

- » 85.6% of CEOs are promoting GenAI and expanded AI models even as they harbor concerns for their own accountabilities.
- » 68% of employees have significant concerns about GenAI's impact on the future of work.
- » 45% of companies are improving AI and GenAI adoption and worker confidence by intuitively pacing the introduction of both based on readiness insights sourced from employee listening.

Defining a future with GenAI often requires companies to address employee listening insights methodically across a diverse range of use cases. Employee listening is essential to shaping, directing, and building personalized experiences at work. Employee listening insights must be collected, studied, answered, and incorporated into the organization's understanding of the workforce's capacity for comfortably and confidently approving and adopting AI tools.

Although AI and GenAI offer many promising benefits, they both require culture and behavior change around what executives, managers, and employees control and influence, particularly regarding the democratization of knowledge centers of excellence and data sets. IDC's data shows that employees are up to 42% more aware of AI use when GenAI tools are introduced. As early GenAI use cases proliferate, everyone from top executives down to the line of business has different perspectives and reservations about the use, design, and adoption of GenAI. According to IDC's September 2023 *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 9*:

- » 85.6% of CEOs are exploring GenAI use cases across their organizations. Top of mind for company leaders is improving customer-facing applications to help reduce response times to questions and drive opportunities for new business. GenAI in employee applications to boost the efficiency of knowledge transfer and business process management comes second but raises internal and individual awareness of AI use the most. The ability of AI and GenAI to help achieve CEO goals for accelerated customer response times and improved productivity relies on employee listening data to source gaps in execution across customer and business objectives and key results. As HR embeds employee listening data into AI decision and resourcing models, CEOs are increasingly guided by the realities of business execution when establishing OKRs, making them more accountable to the line of business. As CEO accountability increases, executive leaders are 17% more likely to slow the rate of AI and GenAI introduction while they optimize their deployments around employees' likelihood to adopt and use the new tools.
- » 88.7% of executive operational leaders — COOs, CIOs, CHROs, and CFOs — are exploring GenAI to enhance costs and efficiency for people and resource management. CHROs and CIOs are most likely to engage GenAI early to enhance human-led processes for training, content and code generation, and co-innovation built on combined information sets. As stewards of employee listening, HR leaders are quick and careful to correlate employee awareness of AI use cases with resource adoption, hesitation, and reservation, helping enhance deployment models around the workforce's capacity for change. Meanwhile, COOs are least likely to comply with AI and GenAI initiatives, choosing instead to preserve their data and knowledge silos.
- » 63.8% of practitioners and employees in the front office are considering the possible impact of adopting a GenAI resource rollout in key areas such as business process transformation, stable employment guarantees, and paced skills growth.

Trends: Concerns, Opportunities, and the Future of GenAI Adoption

Defining a future with GenAI depends on the rate of employee adoption as new features and capabilities are rolled out. The key to successful adoption is aligning the pace at which GenAI provides a new means for business process management with the real rate of employee readiness for process augmentation and change.

Business Leaders Are Hot on GenAI, But IT and Workers Have Concerns

IDC's data shows that 87% of business leaders expect GenAI to increase IT spending. Although there is mounting pressure on operational leaders to explore opportunities for GenAI inclusion, workers are less sanguine about this prospect. IDC's January 2024 *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 1*, found that:

- » 96.7% of employees and managers are concerned about how GenAI will change work processes and impact how they contribute value to the company. Workers want the pace of company-sponsored opportunities for retraining, reskilling, and internal mobility to responsively match the pace of GenAI adoption and task augmentation.
- » 42.7% of customer-facing employees worry that GenAI will significantly change how they maintain their books of business and relationships with customers. The concern about customer experience augmentation includes the perceived likelihood that customer-facing GenAI applications will replace them as a first and/or regular point of contact for customer inquiries.
- » 29.9% of employees are concerned that GenAI will significantly augment the breadth and pace at which managers can consume diverse data without discretion to define and tweak performance improvement plans. On the one hand, GenAI helps turn employee sentiment from diverse data sources into a deeper understanding of what causes performance and productivity changes. On the other hand, the increasing number of managerial GenAI use cases lack transparency policies about the generation and use of models and insights. The missing transparency leads 29.6% of employees to feel in the dark and to actively vocalize sentiments about how leadership acts on and targets their performance.

Despite executive interest in exploring GenAI's value, employees are cautious about the outright adoption of new features, with key roadblocks centering on guarantees for transparency around data use and inclusion, data governance, work guarantees, and process design changes and retraining.

The Voice of the Employee Is a Critical Part of GenAI Design and Adoption

The ability to design and deploy a future with GenAI relies on employees' adoption and willingness to use GenAI tools and resources. As the pressure to explore GenAI's value opportunities rises, operational and front-office leaders and managers must align resource deployment to employee readiness to adopt and use these resources. Early data capture for the voice of the employee (VoE) — surveys, feedback loops, and communications insights — reveals the breadth of employee readiness and response to change.

For the HR leader, early GenAI use cases in the back office increase the scope of how VoE data can be gathered and assessed to discover actionable insights for improving workforce readiness and agility. HR leaders are five times more likely than other business stakeholders to deploy GenAI tools to augment traditional workforce performance and analytical models with employee sentiment and behavior data. GenAI tools help HR leaders aggregate diverse and disparate data sets with varying degrees of structure into contextualized insights that offer a better understanding of what drives performance, engagement, and retention.

While 70% of HR leaders are driven by their own GenAI use cases to build a deeper understanding of employee experiences for enhancing workforce performance outcomes, 95% recognize that workers have various concerns about GenAI use cases both analytically and in their own workflows (source: IDC's *Human Resources Survey*, June 2023).

The biggest focus for HR with regard to GenAI applications is improving its understanding of the impact of employee experiences on work and performance outcomes.

Intuitive pacing phases in GenAI use cases can align with natural employee behavior, focusing on use cases that are easily integrated into the flow of work with fewer process change. Intuitive pacing provides an early foundation to begin augmenting employee tasks and work in ways that do not trigger concerns about GenAI's impact. Advancing GenAI beyond intuitive pacing requires companies to tap into an understanding of how and at what pace the workforce is adapting and responding to the early use cases. Aligning GenAI adoption to behavior then requires defined use cases for HR and business leaders as well as front-office workers.

Conscious worker resistance to AI and GenAI is a significant obstacle to AI-transformed augmentation efforts. More than 45% of companies expect to invest in enhancing some or all their foundational digital environments to intuitively phase in GenAI use cases to already common workflows and processes. When employees become aware of changes to increased GenAI use cases, they are more resistant to GenAI adoption (source: IDC's *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 1*, January 2024, and IDC's *Human Resources Survey*, June 2023). Of the 96.7% of employees worried about GenAI-driven business process changes and skills redundancy:

- » 69% are concerned about how their data will put increasing pressure on them to remain relevant against a backdrop of encroaching automation.
- » 67% are concerned about AI bias due to models trained on business outcomes first.
- » 67% feel disempowered by their employer's lack of transparency about GenAI insights expectations, use limitations, and governance.
- » 64% are concerned that a lack of GenAI training will increase resource inequality.

HR leaders and front-office managers are the first to become aware of how much employees understand about the potential of GenAI versus how their perceptions may spark incorrect assumptions about its use. HR leaders and front-office managers are therefore in a strong position to set the pace and style for how the organization frames and rolls out GenAI capabilities as part of a broader business transformation effort to build GenAI into the blueprint for the company's operational future.

The trouble for HR leaders is that despite having achieved a prominent role among operational stakeholders, more than 60% are not in an independent position to lead versus inform about the design or deployment of business transformation (source: IDC's *Human Resources Survey*, June 2023).

Still, employee perception is necessary for success. IDC's data shows that when CEOs drive organizations to deploy GenAI augmentation cases, they do so consciously and by focusing on improving productivity. CEO drives into GenAI increase the likelihood by 30% that the company will experience employee resistance and slower adoption rates than if they first examined and considered employee readiness to incorporate GenAI into augmented business transformation frameworks.

VoE insights inform the successful implementation of digital transformation and impact business process transformation and workforce reskilling, redeployment, and employer-induced attrition. Sustaining and improving employee sentiment are key elements in orchestrating business value outcomes, especially throughout the transformation journey. As

employees increasingly expect to be included in work execution design, transparently engineering changes in work execution to an understanding of workforce readiness to adopt and adapt to these changes is more important than ever.

Overcoming Social AI Hesitation and Driving Positive Value

More than 60% of companies expect to deploy GenAI to enhance already adopted front-office digital tools. For most, the GenAI journey is still in an experimental phase, with concrete use cases focusing on task and knowledge improvements and knowledge use cases in governance design and testing.

Initial front-office use cases for GenAI show that strong and proactive worker adoption centers on communication enhancements, learning, recognition, and digital assistance. IDC's *Human Resources Survey* revealed that:

- » 78.4% of organizations are expanding GenAI into employee training to promote faster resource development to address the growing demand for upskilling and reskilling. More than 70% of employees already want to focus on learning and development to grow and maintain relevant skills in the face of future business transformation.
- » 77.2% are deploying GenAI in talent intelligence and recruitment to accelerate job requisition generation and applicant analyses with greater accuracy and more diverse levers for candidate consideration. In addition, 77.0% are also deepening GenAI applications for skills validation across internal and external candidates in a constantly changing field of position openings and requisitions.
- » 75.8% of HR leaders are using GenAI to adapt and personalize VoE data capture, so it's more personal and conversational, leaning into employee sentiment contributions to support digital systems "learning" as workers engage and contribute feedback. While front-office GenAI applications focus on personalizing learning and supporting HR teams to meet employee needs amid business changes, back-office HR leaders are leveraging GenAI to keep pace with each worker's experiential feedback as much as possible.
- » 75.0% of organizational leaders are developing and deploying digital assistants to provide faster and more efficient access to internal information and resources across multiple knowledge and resource centers within limits. Digital assistance is helping workers and executive leaders access information and resources while providing insights into employee sentiment on the impact of accessibility on employee experience.

Successful companies are pacing early deployments based on HR's understanding of workforce readiness in areas of growing demand, such as content, engagement, guidance, and knowledge transfer. As employees accustom themselves to these use cases, which augment some of their biggest challenge areas, they have the chance to become comfortable with the potential benefits that GenAI can offer, opening the door for employers to explore this technology incrementally.

Although HR leaders continue to face opposition to industry-leading business transformation efforts, a growing number of HR insights are impacting how business transformation is designed and executed internally and with partners. As a result, the more prevalent use cases for GenAI augment worker processes for resource direction and learning that are in demand across the workforce and contribute to amalgamating increasingly diverse insights to further align digital transformation with workforce adoption readiness.

Benefits: GenAI as a Powerful Tool for Discovery and Improvement

GenAI is increasingly becoming an augmentation tool for business transformation guidance, leading many companies to envision an adaptable future state in which technology enhances human-driven outcomes. Behind the shift from an automation to an augmentation mentality is the elevation of HR's position in business transformation guidance, focusing on HR's use of GenAI capabilities to evaluate and assimilate VoE.

Organizations are most likely to achieve success adopting GenAI when they structure, design, and deploy transformation plans and initiatives in a way that aligns GenAI deployment with the pace of workforce readiness to adopt it. Pacing GenAI rollout based on workforce readiness requires understanding employee sentiments, goals, and challenges. As the list of stakeholders in GenAI enablement grows, readiness-paced deployment draws on HR to frame the use of VoE data to enhance how organizationwide resource frameworks are designed and promoted.

Early VoE insights reveal worker hesitation and distrust around the back-office use of GenAI to identify performance opportunities as well as the front-office goal to achieve learning, communications, and talent placement. The biggest challenge to large-scale, uniform GenAI deployment and adoption has more to do with trusting the organizational use case and associated plans for change beyond promises of employee augmentation. Using GenAI for early discovery in the back office to understand front-office concerns allows HR leaders to guide resource and transformation deployment around workforce behavioral metrics and facilitate GenAI business process augmentation and change. Consequently, GenAI gives HR more influence over early design and discovery to facilitate business transformation, which has historically been led by the CEO and more transactional teams in finance and operations.

Behavioral pacing around front-office workforce priorities leads many organizations to recognize that GenAI advances AI transformation to include more aspects of business transformation change. HR's early GenAI use cases help infuse a deeper understanding of the impact of top-down transformation guidance into workforce performance metrics. IDC's data shows that despite 68.8% of companies planning to expand GenAI use cases across their workforce, only 29.7% are independently consulting VoE data to internally plan and design for people and organizational (P&O) change. However, as companies seek guidance from consulting partners on how to design P&O change around GenAI adoption, they are 31.6% more likely to incorporate behavioral alignment as a key pace marker for rollout and success.

Building a Future with GenAI

Building a future with GenAI is an HR problem before it is a digital, data, and organizational one. GenAI has significant potential to increase the rate of resource and knowledge flow and guidance within an organization and across its workforce. The workforce is wary of the next iteration of digital development and disruption that has the capacity to automate human-executed tasks while accelerating the ones that remain.

As many organizations define and implement GenAI use cases, those driven by financial and operational goals are facing highly variable adoption metrics that often lead to early value realization declines. Behind the scenes, HR's stewardship of VoE insights reveals employee perceptions about digital transformation efforts, which indicate that when organizational leaders fail to inclusively design and communicate for P&O change, workers tend to conduct business as usual until their leaders mandate change.

Building a future with GenAI should be an inclusive process that reflects and incorporates the behavioral readiness of employees to work alongside tools that engage with them in response to their direct, conversational queries. Shifting the workforce culture from automation to augmentation requires an HR-driven partnership that leverages efficiently

modeled behavioral insights based on the VoE and unified through an early back-office application of GenAI. The power of GenAI for early discovery and future use case scoping rests on how it ties diverse data sources together to collectively enhance the investigative and predictive AI modeling of the organization's unified state. Including employee behavior in the mix relies on HR's contribution as an elevated stakeholder in the design process as well as a culture shift by the executive leadership team to rethink digital enablement's contribution to the business value proposition.

The journey to successful GenAI adoption requires process and culture change across the organization. Working with a partner can help with transformation adoption, which facilitates a more planned and executable adoption framework that aligns with workforce changes. If done right, GenAI can be a tool to understand the organization's criteria for evolution and adaptation as it aligns workforce needs with the needs of its customer base.

Considering PwC

Since GenAI's emergence in workforce transformation, VoE has become a critical component in the design and adoption of new technologies. As the pressure on executives to explore GenAI's value opportunities rises, operational and front-office leaders and managers should align resource deployment to employee readiness to adopt and use these resources. Early data capture for VoE — surveys, feedback loops, and communications insights — reveals the breadth of employee readiness and response to change.

PwC strives to be a preeminent advisor in preparing organizations for the workforce of the future. To do that requires solving client issues around HR strategy and transformation, talent strategy, behavioral change, and rewards and well-being. Listen Platform, a PwC product, is designed to help companies understand their stakeholders' opinions, attitudes, and experiences. This tool helps organizations to make data-driven decisions rather than relying solely on intuition. It facilitates prompt connections with the appropriate people, enabling swift action to help address issues as they arise. The platform also provides access to a wide range of surveys crafted by experienced practitioners, confirming the collection of relevant data from polled audiences.

Listen Platform uses AI-driven analytics and business linkages to analyze data, which are presented through configurable dashboards and reports. The platform also helps guide users from analysis to action planning, confirming an effective action plan is in place to improve identified areas of opportunity. This process allows for targeted efforts and swift responses to emerging issues.

The platform combines a powerful tech infrastructure with PwC's managed services, providing an easy-to-use, high-touch experience. It features built-in advanced analytics and natural language processing that leverage AI technology, offering valuable insights into what helps drive a business. The platform's continuously updated insights enable timely action on results, driving meaningful and productive change.

Challenges

Leveraging AI for foundational and continuous discovery of employee sentiment, connection, capabilities, skills, and challenges for client organizations helps speed up PwC's ability to enmesh the company's solutions into an organization's operational frameworks. As PwC works with its clients to frame change, transformation, and digital enablement, acting on AI insights helps reduce timelines for early discovery and transformational pivots that often require complex analytics and alignment between key stakeholders under more traditional consulting frameworks and methodologies.

Acting with AI carries risks and challenges including the fact that clients and consultants alike should be trained to use it and process its outputs, especially as GenAI makes it easier to naturally query its referenceable data, insights, and stored information. GenAI also democratizes complex data and insights accessibility requiring training for those members of the client's workforce given permission to use it. Acting with AI as a primary discovery tool may be risky as insights-based recommendations may run counter to the original goals set by the organization, expand the scope of applicable transformation, or result in workforce and change management factors that inhibit future transformational objectives.

Transitioning around VoE requires culture change around how organizational management and planning happens. Leaning into early data discovery guidance can risk overlooking the long-term requirements for succeeding with AI and GenAI. If the client's executive layer has not taken steps to build tighter decision alignment, especially at the data and governance levels, VoE insights will inform execution and adoption challenges but still require planning to integrate them operationally and in the flow of work. Achieving the full value of AI-infused response, change, and transformation guidance requires more nimbly informed decision alignment between key business stakeholders, some of whom may not be involved in the original scope of the consulting engagement.

Conclusion

GenAI is a tool to augment human investment. As executive leaders drive up pressure to explore GenAI use cases, achieving value with them depends on front-office adoption, which hinges on the readiness of the workforce to collaborate with and through the tools. GenAI leads to organizational changes that are cultural, operational, and behavioral. Overcoming workforce adoption challenges requires companies to design for all three change aspects from the viewpoint of employees' concerns.

GenAI is an HR problem before it is a digital, data, and organizational one.

From the executive perspective, GenAI augments the power of human contributions, providing opportunities to personalize work experiences and kick off employee growth journeys in lockstep with organizational change. Human augmentation connects workforce behavior to the viability of objectives and key results, improving opportunities to streamline costs around individual needs. From the employee's perspective, GenAI induces change and variability and seemingly competes for some of the tasks and skills that reinforce employees' sense of value at work.

Overcoming employee resistance to GenAI adoption requires companies to intuitively pace the introduction of this technology to the workforce. Intuitive pacing taps into the voice of the employee to understand workforce readiness to change and transform around new capabilities, goals, and operational dynamics. Working with an external specialist to assess the state of workforce readiness as well as the company's connection to that readiness state can significantly enhance the ability to achieve intuitive pacing, phasing GenAI into workflows from the point of digital collaboration with employees.

About the Analyst



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Zachary Chertok is the research manager for IDC in employee experience (EX). Mr. Chertok's core research coverage includes all aspects of employee experience management, including but not limited to wellness and well-being; adaptive and responsive learning and development; recognition; employee engagement; corporate culture; diversity, equity, and inclusion; employee journey mapping; analytical personalization; and supporting digital and consultative services. In addition to his research for IDC, Mr. Chertok teaches at Columbia University's HCM program within Columbia's School of Professional Studies.

MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

Listen Platform, a PwC product, aids in understanding stakeholders' opinions and experiences, facilitating data-driven decisions and aiding in successful workforce transformations. It uses AI-driven analytics to analyze data, guiding users from analysis to action planning. The platform can help improve tech adoption and new hire experience, boost productivity, and evaluate diversity and inclusion. Meanwhile, PwC's workforce transformation practice, supported by GenAI, helps prepare companies for the future workforce, addressing HR strategy, talent strategy, and behavioral change. PwC's own investment in AI capabilities and offerings helps clients reimagine their businesses using GenAI. Learn more [today](#).



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