



Can AI Make Your Business More Human?

This article is the second half of a two-part series on how HR and IT can intersect to help organizations succeed at AI adoption. **Susan Bruechner, executive vice president of Human Resources**, and **Porter Orr, assistant vice president of Artificial Intelligence and Automation**, participated in the discussion.

Capturing the value of AI goes beyond gaining efficiencies. Using the technology to augment human talent can enable employees to focus more deeply — and with greater empathy and expertise — on customers. One way to get there? Strategic collaboration between IT and HR.

Pinpointing Your North Star

What makes some companies adept at implementing AI? In an interview on AI adoption, Susan Bruechner, The Standard's executive vice president of Human Resources, said, "Successfully incorporating AI into your business is easier if you have a really compelling culture — one that you can articulate and hang your hat on, especially around what makes you different."

Having a strong culture means everyone in the organization understands who you are, what you stand for and where your organization is heading. A company with a well-established culture can use AI to amplify it. If expertise is a key aspect of that culture, AI can help build technology that frees employees and core businesses from busy work, allowing them to spend more energy deploying their knowledge and skill to solve customers' problems.

The Standard's assistant vice president of Artificial Intelligence and Automation, Porter Orr, also participated in the interview. He said, "When you ground your AI strategy in company culture, you're not just reacting to another new technology. Instead, culture will drive what you're doing. That frees you from running anyone else's race — so you can win your own."

A company with a well-established culture can use AI to amplify it.



In navigating the change across an enterprise, everyone needs a clear view of the organization's North Star. For example, beyond turning a profit, a single, unifying direction might be caring about people. With this as a guide, it's easier for a company to ensure it does right by customers and employees while weaving AI into its business processes.

Amplifying Organizational Strengths

It's understandable that leaders focus on AI's ability to save time and money. And many employees worry that the goal of AI is to replace human workers. But organizations will want to avoid falling into the trap of substituting people with machines to accomplish the same tasks their workers did.

It makes more sense to use AI to identify and develop different business models that enhance and extend a company's strengths. Tools like agentic and generative AI can enhance team members, empowering them to offer a better experience to those you serve. Orr noted, "I think you need to flip your mental model around and ask, 'How can Human Resources really guide you in implementing AI strategy in the right way?'"

For starters, organizations might focus on those aspects of being human they don't want to lose. Maybe empathy and expertise underpin everything a business does. How can that business use AI as a tool to make human team members even more empathetic experts? In part, that means looking at how HR can help guide an AI strategy.

Another asset most institutions probably value is the human filter of judgment. Bruechner said, "It's difficult to imagine teaching a machine judgment when it's difficult to instill this trait in a person. The human beings we work with are really smart. We want them saying, 'I'm not sure that's what the data is telling us' before we actually go to implement something."

If a company has invested in its people, doing the work to teach them to evaluate and assess, it's reasonable to believe that investment will pay off as AI becomes part of workflows.



It makes more sense to use AI to identify and develop different business models that enhance and extend a company's strengths.

Orr added that "Adopting AI requires thinking beyond technology. In certain respects, it's more about operational change based on what AI can do. Mapping, training and upgrading skills are key to making an AI initiative successful in capturing value. If you create the technology but don't allow your team to grow with it, the value could be lost."

In terms of interaction within an organization, AI-powered assistants can help build empathy across teams. Employees who check these tools for quick, easy insight into other disciplines can prepare themselves to collaborate with colleagues. Gaining a better understanding of their co-workers' roles and challenges will help them become more effective partners.

Making Workplace Benefits More Relevant

Bruechner also pointed to AI's potential to further individualize workplace benefits. She said, "When employees see the benefit offerings you're providing, every one of them and their family members should have an equitable experience. Using AI to shape benefits design so it feels more relevant to workers may be a path to providing that experience."

Clearly, it's important to have a human perspective on what the data is saying. As they leverage both human judgment and AI, HR teams will likely identify some strong prospects for personalizing benefit plans. "What people want from employers is often very generationally different. I think AI could present some great opportunities to tailor benefit plans so they're relevant for different age demographics," Bruechner added.

Putting People at the Center

It's easy to focus on all the tech wizardry offered by AI. If organizations also approach technology as a tool for amplifying their culture, they'll need to identify those aspects they want to deepen. It makes sense to consider where concern for people fits into a company's value system. Orr highlighted that ensuring human beings are at the heart of a business's AI strategy is a path both to offering customers a solid experience and attracting and retaining a talented workforce. "An organization's AI strategy should be predicated on culture, which is based on purpose," he said. "We didn't go out and adopt AI because AI was cool. We've pursued AI adoption because we think it's the best way to serve our customers and partners."



... consider where concern for people fits into a company's value system.

© 2026 StanCorp Financial Group, Inc.

Established in 1906, The Standard is a family of companies dedicated to helping customers achieve financial well-being and peace of mind. We are a leading provider of financial protection products and services for employers and individuals. The Standard is the marketing name for StanCorp Financial Group, Inc., and subsidiaries. Insurance products are offered by Standard Insurance Company of 1100 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, Oregon, in all states except New York; The Standard Life Insurance Company of New York of 445 Hamilton Avenue, 11th Floor, White Plains, New York, only in New York; and American Heritage Life Insurance Company of 4920 San Pablo Road South, Suite 200C, Jacksonville, Florida, in all states except New York. Product features and availability vary by state and company and are solely the responsibility of each subsidiary. Each company is solely responsible for its own financial condition. For more information about The Standard, visit standard.com and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

(7/26)