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ROUNDTABLE PODCAST SERIES – EPISODE THREE

SPECIAL REPORT

How Can Nations Build the Talent and Skills Required to Sustain AI-Driven Economies?

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Chiara Marcati
Chief Advisory & Business Officer
AI71

AI Success Will Depend on Human Intelligence

Artificial intelligence may be the fastest technological revolution in modern history, but the future of AI-driven economies will ultimately depend on deeply human capabilities. Technical expertise alone will not determine success. Leadership, critical thinking, empathy, communication, and organizational culture may prove even more valuable as AI adoption accelerates globally.

The speed of AI advancement has created enormous excitement, but also confusion. Many organizations are still experimenting without fully understanding how AI should reshape operating models, workflows, or workforce structures. As a result, the majority of AI transformations continue to fail — not because the technology is weak, but because organizations underestimate the human side of change management.

Leadership Sets the Tone for Adoption

Employees naturally mirror leadership behavior. When executives visibly embrace AI, prioritize it strategically, and communicate optimism around transformation, organizations tend to accelerate adoption. Conversely, leadership hesitation or fear often creates resistance throughout the workforce.

AI transformation therefore requires more than investment in tools. It demands leadership visibility, incentive structures, organizational clarity, and a workforce culture willing to adapt continuously.

Education Must Return to Thinking Skills

As AI automates more technical tasks, education systems may need to refocus on philosophy, ethics, reasoning, and critical thinking rather than memorization or purely technical instruction. Future leaders may manage intelligent agents as much as they manage people, making human judgment and analytical reasoning increasingly important.

The global competition for AI talent will also depend on ecosystems rather than salaries alone. Talent gravitates toward communities where innovation, collaboration, and opportunity already exist. For emerging AI hubs, building interconnected global ecosystems may become more important than simply attracting individuals through financial incentives. ■

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TOP 9 TAKEAWAYS

HOLISTIC AI TRANSFORMATION MATTERS

Chiara Marcati
Chief Advisory & Business Officer, AI71

1. Building sustainable AI economies demands integrated strategies combining technical capabilities, leadership development, education reform, and strong innovation ecosystems.

2. Critical thinking, empathy, leadership, and communication will become more valuable as AI automates repetitive technical tasks across industries and organizations.

3. Employees mirror executive attitudes toward AI, making visible leadership adoption essential for building optimism, trust, and enterprise-wide transformation momentum.

4. The majority of AI initiatives collapse because organizations underestimate change management, communication, incentives, and workforce engagement during transformation efforts.

5. Schools and universities should focus less on memorization and more on developing critical reasoning, ethics, creativity, and human-centered problem-solving capabilities.

6. As AI accelerates automation, disciplines that strengthen analytical reasoning, ethical judgment, and intellectual curiosity may regain strategic importance within education systems.

7. Organizations must redesign workflows, structures, and decision-making processes entirely instead of simply layering AI tools onto outdated operational models.

8. AI professionals stay where thriving innovation communities exist, making collaboration, networking, and ecosystem development critical for attracting global expertise.

9. Cross-border AI partnerships connecting regions like the Gulf, Singapore, and Europe can create stronger innovation ecosystems capable of competing globally.

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"Philosophy may become strategically important again because strong critical thinking is essential to challenge and validate AI-generated outputs responsibly."

Chiara Marcati
Chief Advisory & Business Officer
AI71

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SOUNDINGS

"Employees adopt AI faster when leadership visibly embraces the technology and demonstrates optimism, confidence, and strategic commitment from the top."

Chiara Marcati
Chief Advisory & Business Officer, AI71

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Amit Sreedharan
AVP & Business Head, MEA- Energy, Services and Government, Infosys

Talent Will Define the AI Economy

Artificial intelligence may be transforming industries at unprecedented speed, but the real differentiator will remain human talent. While fears around job displacement continue to dominate public discussion, history shows that every major technological shift has ultimately elevated productivity rather than eliminated human value altogether. AI is unlikely to be any different.

The future of AI-driven economies will depend on how effectively organizations nurture, reskill, and empower their workforce. AI adoption is not fundamentally a technology challenge, but a human challenge. Resistance to change remains one of the biggest barriers to successful transformation, particularly when employees fail to understand how AI benefits their roles, productivity, and long-term career growth.

Reskilling Must Become Continuous

Organizations can no longer rely on traditional training models that deliver one-time certifications or static learning programs. Instead, enterprises must embed continuous learning directly into workflows through ongoing AI education, microlearning, practical application, and workplace experimentation. The pace of AI development is simply too fast for conventional education cycles to keep up.

Equally important is the need for strong ecosystem partnerships. Enterprises cannot solve the AI capability gap alone. Collaboration with cloud providers, infrastructure partners, AI developers, and technology platforms will be essential for accelerating workforce readiness and scaling AI adoption effectively.

AI Must Deliver Real Business Value

The early phase of AI adoption was often dominated by hype-driven experimentation, with organizations launching isolated pilots without clearly defined outcomes. That phase is beginning to mature. Enterprises are now becoming more disciplined, focusing on use cases that demonstrate measurable business value, operational feasibility, and strong governance standards.

As AI accelerates productivity, the workforce of the future will increasingly depend on adaptability, prompt engineering, critical thinking, and governance oversight. Technical expertise will remain important, but long-term competitiveness will belong to organizations capable of continuously evolving both their technology and their people. ■

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TALENT DRIVES AI SUCCESS

Amit Sreedharan
AVP & Business Head, MEA- Energy, Services and Government, Infosys

1. AI's future depends on organizations continuously nurturing technical and human capabilities, ensuring today's workforce evolves fast enough to support tomorrow's intelligent enterprise transformation.

2. Rather than replacing employees entirely, AI shifts people away from repetitive tasks toward higher-value work requiring creativity, decision-making, innovation, and strategic problem-solving capabilities.

3. Organizations can no longer rely on one-time training programs and instead need continuous AI learning ecosystems embedded into everyday workflows, certifications, and operational responsibilities.

4. The greatest obstacle to AI adoption is not technology limitations but employee resistance, fear of change, and uncertainty about how evolving roles will impact careers.

5. Collaborating with cloud providers, AI innovators, and technology ecosystems enables enterprises to strengthen internal capabilities faster while scaling AI adoption more effectively across operations.

6. AI initiatives succeed when organizations prioritize business outcomes, measurable impact, and practical use cases instead of experimenting without clear operational or financial objectives.

7. Responsible AI deployment requires strong governance frameworks addressing security, ethics, privacy, and enterprise readiness before organizations scale AI solutions companywide.

8. Daily learning habits and short-form AI education help employees stay updated with rapidly evolving technologies without disrupting productivity or requiring lengthy classroom-based training.

9. Organizations that believe in human adaptability, curiosity, and continuous learning will build stronger future-ready workforces capable of thriving alongside advancing AI technologies.

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"The AI hype cycle is maturing. Organizations are now prioritizing use cases that deliver measurable business value instead of endless experimentation without outcomes."

Amit Sreedharan
AVP & Business Head, MEA- Energy, Services and Government, Infosys

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SOUNDINGS

"AI will not eliminate human potential — it will elevate it. The people performing repetitive work today will evolve into higher-value, more productive roles tomorrow."

Amit Sreedharan
AVP & Business Head, MEA- Energy, Services and Government, Infosys

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Hala Al Hashmi
IT Manager
Sharjah National Oil Corporation (SNOC)

AI Adoption Is Ultimately a Human Challenge

Artificial intelligence is advancing faster than most organizations and education systems can realistically absorb. While technology capabilities continue accelerating, the real bottleneck is increasingly human capital — the ability to develop, reskill, and retain talent fast enough to sustain transformation.

The challenge is not the absence of AI tools or infrastructure. The challenge is the lack of coordination between education systems, workforce development, organizational strategy, and leadership alignment. Many institutions still approach reskilling as an isolated HR initiative rather than a core business capability, creating fragmented learning programs that fail to scale at the pace AI adoption now demands.

Learning Must Be Embedded into Work

Traditional education systems are struggling to keep pace with AI's rate of change. Curriculums remain heavily theoretical and update cycles are far too slow for a rapidly evolving technology environment. As a result, organizations must increasingly build learning directly into operational workflows.

The most effective AI education happens on the job — through practical application, real-world problem solving, and continuous interaction with enterprise systems. Embedding AI learning into ERP platforms, analytics tools, and operational systems enables employees to develop skills while immediately applying knowledge to business outcomes.
Industry collaboration with universities will also become increasingly important. Partnerships that expose students to AI applications, cybersecurity systems, and operational technologies before graduation help bridge the growing disconnect between academia and industry requirements.

Leadership Will Determine Adoption Success

Successful AI transformation requires more than technology deployment. Leadership communication, transparency, and culture will determine whether employees embrace or resist change. Organizations must clearly position AI as a tool that augments human performance rather than replaces people entirely. In AI-driven economies, adoption itself becomes the ultimate competitive advantage. Technology only creates value once people understand it, trust it, and integrate it into everyday decision-making and operations. ■

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TOP 9 TAKEAWAYS

INTEGRATED AI WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

Hala Al Hashmi
IT Manager, Sharjah National Oil Corporation (SNOC)

1. AI capabilities are evolving rapidly while organizations and education systems continue struggling to develop workforce skills quickly enough to support sustainable digital transformation.

2. Organizations should treat AI reskilling as a core operational priority instead of isolated HR initiatives to ensure learning programs scale effectively across the enterprise.

3. Theoretical classroom learning alone is insufficient, making hands-on AI experience and workplace integration essential for developing real-world skills and operational confidence.

4. AI professionals understand their market value, requiring organizations to provide clear career paths, leadership support, and meaningful opportunities to retain high-performing talent.

5. Successful transformation depends on integrating education, reskilling, retention, leadership commitment, and operational strategy rather than addressing challenges independently.

6. Embedding AI learning into daily systems, tools, and processes helps employees continuously develop skills while immediately applying knowledge to business operations.

7. Organizations should communicate clearly that AI enhances human performance rather than replacing employees, helping reduce resistance and encourage workforce adoption.

8. AI initiatives require executive oversight, dedicated funding, measurable accountability, and strategic alignment to ensure long-term adoption and business value creation.

9. Organizations should broaden recruitment beyond regional boundaries, leveraging remote work and international expertise to strengthen AI and cybersecurity capabilities faster.

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"The fastest way to build AI capability is by embedding learning directly into everyday workflows and practical operational environments."

Hala Al Hashmi
IT Manager
Sharjah National Oil Corporation (SNOC)

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SOUNDINGS

"The best way to retain AI knowledge is through practical application. Learning becomes most effective when embedded directly into daily workflows."

Hala Al Hashmi
IT Manager, Sharjah National Oil Corporation (SNOC)

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Robin Machado
Head of Digital R&D MEA, Siemens Energy
& ADYBC Board Member

AI Requires Purpose Before Scale

Artificial intelligence is reshaping industries at extraordinary speed, yet the reality is that nobody fully knows what the final operating model will look like. Much like the dot-com era, organizations are making aggressive bets while simultaneously navigating uncertainty around long-term value, adoption, and sustainability.

The pressure to deploy AI rapidly can tempt organizations into experimentation without direction. But successful AI transformation requires discipline. The critical question is not whether AI can be implemented, but whether a specific use case genuinely justifies the investment, operational effort, and organizational change required to sustain it.

AI Must Deliver Measurable Outcomes

Within industries such as energy, where risk tolerance is naturally lower, AI adoption must be grounded in measurable business value. Use cases need to demonstrate clear operational benefits before organizations can justify scaling investment or driving enterprise-wide transformation.

Change management becomes significantly easier once employees understand how AI improves outcomes. The technology itself is rarely the problem. Resistance typically emerges when organizations fail to communicate practical benefits or align transformation with real operational needs.

Education Must Become More Adaptive

Traditional education systems are struggling to keep pace with AI's acceleration. By the time many students complete a course, portions of the material may already be outdated. This reality is driving growing demand for flexible, microlearning-based education ecosystems that allow professionals to continuously evolve their skills.

At the same time, future workforce value will increasingly shift toward human-centered capabilities. As automation handles more technical and repetitive tasks, organizations will place greater importance on creativity, empathy, communication, critical thinking, and the ability to identify meaningful use cases for AI deployment. Ultimately, AI success will depend not simply on technical infrastructure, but on the ability to connect technology with human understanding, business outcomes, and purposeful innovation. ■

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TOP 9 TAKEAWAYS

INNOVATION REQUIRES PURPOSEFUL ADOPTION

Robin Machado
Head of Digital R&D MEA, Siemens Energy & ADYBC Board Member

1. Like the dot-com revolution, AI is reshaping industries despite uncertainty, requiring organizations to adapt quickly while navigating rapidly changing technological possibilities.

2. Professionals should focus on areas they genuinely enjoy because adaptability, curiosity, and enthusiasm create stronger long-term success during periods of technological disruption.

3. Organizations increasingly prioritize mindset, learning agility, and problem-solving potential while teaching employees the technical skills required for evolving AI environments.

4. AI initiatives should only scale when organizations clearly identify measurable business value and operational outcomes capable of justifying investment and transformation efforts.

5. Technology alone cannot drive transformation because employee adoption, communication, and organizational buy-in remain essential

6. Traditional learning systems struggle to match AI's speed, creating demand for microlearning platforms and continuously evolving educational approaches focused on adaptability.

7. Public-private partnerships and strategic investments help regions build innovation hubs, accelerate intellectual property development, and strengthen local AI research capabilities.

8. Strong digital infrastructure, visionary leadership, and advanced research ecosystems encourage skilled professionals to relocate and contribute to regional AI growth.

9. As automation increases, uniquely human strengths like creativity, empathy, critical thinking, and collaboration will become increasingly valuable across AI-driven industries.

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"Regions investing aggressively in infrastructure, education, and visionary leadership will attract the talent needed to build globally competitive AI ecosystems."

Robin Machado
Head of Digital R&D MEA
Siemens Energy

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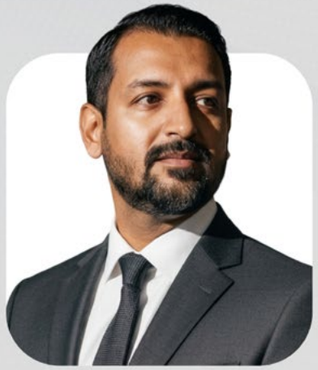
SOUNDINGS

"Successful AI transformation begins only when organizations identify use cases capable of justifying the investment, operational effort, and organizational change required."

Robin Machado
Head of Digital R&D MEA, Siemens Energy
& ADYBC Board Member



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