

# AI Leadership Journey

Become a Better Leader and  
Manager in the Age of AI



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Better Leaders Lab

# AI Leadership Journey

This is the summary of a nine week long email journey Better Leaders Lab launched 2025.

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# This Is Your Job Now 💡

## Why Every Leader Must Engage With AI

Let's be honest: most leadership conversations about AI are either breathless hype or nervous avoidance. But here's the reality: AI is already transforming how we work, think, decide, hire, plan and lead. If you are in a leadership role and you're not actively engaging with what AI means for your team, your business, and your strategy, you're falling behind. Fast.

This is not a technical issue. It's a leadership issue.

It's about how we design organizations, allocate resources, communicate with stakeholders, and build products. It's about how we make decisions - better ones, faster, and more informed. It's about whether we treat talent like humans or dashboards.

It's about ethics, equity, and responsibility.

And no, you can't delegate this. Not to your CTO. Not to your data team. Not to some consultant who'll send you a PowerPoint and walk away. This is core leadership territory now. Because if you don't understand the capabilities and limitations of AI, you can't evaluate risk. If you don't engage with it strategically, you can't shape its impact. And if you don't learn to use it responsibly, you're gambling with trust.

AI isn't going to replace leaders. But it will expose the ones who are out of their depth.

That's why we created the AI Leadership Journey. Not as a crash course in jargon, but as a clear, human-centered path to navigating this transformation. You don't need to become an engineer. But you do need to lead with clarity. You need to ask smarter questions. You need to know what matters - and what doesn't - in a world where machines can generate, recommend, and automate, but not lead. You can design your own ethical boundaries and decide how much "human in the loop" you want.

The leaders who will thrive in this new era aren't the ones who know all the answers. They're the ones asking better questions, faster. Start there. Start now.

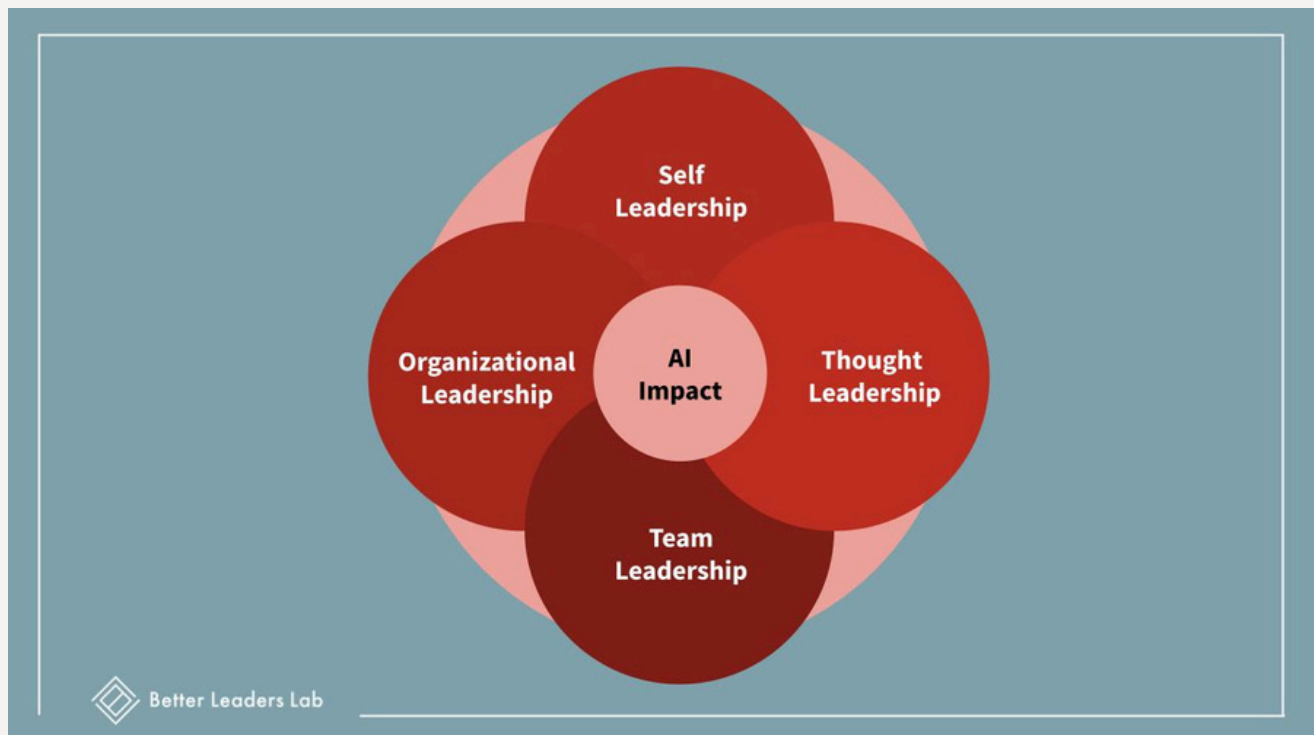
Anita Zielina, CEO Better Leaders Lab



## #1 The Key Areas Where AI Is Changing Leadership 🧑🏻‍💻 ♀

AI won't turn bad managers into good ones, but it can potentially make good managers excellent. Discussions around AI integration often focus solely on efficiency gains or content generation. However, GenAI can do much more: it can act as a proactive, structured, and well-connected assistant for leaders in their daily routines.

Deploy AI exactly where it hurts—where "pain points" have been identified that technology can help address, and ideally, resolve. The goal is not to replace leadership but to make it more effective, inclusive, empathetic, and data-driven through smart AI-powered processes.



AI is impacting leadership in four areas: Organizational leadership, team leadership, self leadership and thought leadership.

# 1. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Does your organization have the right talents, structure, culture, and strategy to create value and navigate change in the AI revolution? What strategic impulses should you, as a leader, initiate now?

Key Questions:

- Where is AI embedded within the organization, and does it have sufficient buy-in from management?
- Does your organization have a customer-centric AI strategy, and does it align with the overall strategy?
- Are AI skills and talent present in the organization, and are they being nurtured appropriately?

Concrete examples of leveraging AI for improvement:

- Faster and more efficient competitor and market analysis through automated market research, trend monitoring, and forecasting.
- Enhancing knowledge management by automatically summarizing meetings, industry articles, and internal documents.
- Developing AI specialists and providing widespread upskilling opportunities for all employees.

# 2. SELF-LEADERSHIP

Self-leadership is about me as a leader—leveraging my strengths and compensating for weaknesses. AI can serve as a supportive tool to lead more effectively and systematically, make more sustainable decisions, and optimize time and energy management as a leader.

Key Questions:

- How can AI enhance my self-reflection and decision-making?
- Can AI help me better track and manage tasks and to-dos?
- Which tools assist me in using time more efficiently and setting priorities?

Concrete examples of leveraging AI for improvement:

- Better organization of personal workload through AI-powered task managers that prioritize and automate workflows.
- Meeting documentation (analog/digital) through automatic transcription, summarization, and AI-generated action points.
- AI assistants as confidential sparring partners that help set goals, monitor progress, and reflect on priorities.

### 3. TEAM LEADERSHIP

Leadership also means taking responsibility for guiding others into the future and supporting them through transformation. AI can help, as leaders are often extremely busy while managing multiple stakeholders. AI enables leaders to lead with greater empathy and clarity and to better support teams throughout change processes.

Key Questions:

- How can we make job postings more inclusive and future-oriented?
- How can we ensure employees enjoy staying with the company and feel valued?
- How can managers use AI to lead employees more effectively, clearly, and with better structure?

Concrete examples of leveraging AI for improvement:

- Practicing difficult conversations with AI-powered chatbots or simulation tools for feedback discussions, salary negotiations, or conflict resolution.
- Regularly documenting and structuring key priorities, which can be automatically shared with other leaders.
- Gathering anonymous (mental) feedback through AI-driven surveys, sentiment analyses, and chatbots that support employees.

### 4. THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

As a leader, you are responsible for communicating both internally and externally to convey clarity, vision, and strategy with credibility. In times of rapid change, this communication becomes even more crucial. Thought leadership means providing guidance, interpreting trends, and setting innovative impulses—both within the team and across the industry. AI can help fulfill this role more effectively.

Key Questions:

- How can I consistently repeat and communicate key strategic messages?
- How can AI help me listen more empathetically by identifying patterns in feedback and discussions?
- How can I document, structure, and refine my thoughts to communicate my messages more clearly?

Concrete examples of leveraging AI for improvement:

- Structuring and categorizing personal thoughts by using AI to organize and prioritize notes and ideas.
- Automatically preparing, visualizing, and scheduling regular monthly strategy updates with GenAI to enhance clarity.
- Refining and revising strategic vision and mission documents through AI-powered text generation and semantic analysis.



## #2 The Transforming Role of Leaders in the AI Era 🌐

Leading in the age of AI isn't about chasing every new technology—it's about using it wisely and with intention. A strong grasp of technology is valuable, but what truly defines great leadership today are ethical, strategic, and cultural qualities.

Leaders who prioritize empathy, fairness, and transparency don't just future-proof their own success—they actively shape the future. AI shouldn't be seen as a rival or blindly adopted. Instead, it should be used as a tool to build more effective, inclusive, and innovative leadership.

At its core, AI is only as powerful as the leaders who wield it. Leadership in this era means aligning technology with human integrity and applying it where it creates real value.

### The Role of Leaders in the AI Era

1. Navigating Constant Change 🧭
2. Championing Equity and Ethical AI Leadership 🦊
3. Lifelong Learning as a New(ish) Imperative 📖
4. Balancing Tech with Human-Centered Empathy 🤖
5. Empowering Teams to Innovate and Adapt 🙌



The role of leaders in the AI area is transforming and evolving particularly in five areas.

### 1. NAVIGATING CONSTANT CHANGE

One of the most crucial leadership responsibilities is guiding teams through continuous change. AI isn't just about streamlining operations—it's upending business models, redefining team structures, and altering decision-making processes.

Successfully managing change in the AI era requires collaboration across disciplines, turning strategy into action. AI can help by surfacing insights, identifying patterns, and supporting agile decision-making. But in the end, meaningful transformation depends on human leadership, not just algorithms.

## 2. CHAMPIONING EQUITY AND ETHICAL AI LEADERSHIP

AI is only as fair and inclusive as the people designing it. Leaders must actively work to minimize bias and ensure AI-driven systems promote diversity, fairness, and accountability.

Embedding ethical AI principles isn't just a technical task—it's a leadership responsibility. Key questions include:

- Who benefits from AI-driven decisions, and who might be left behind?
- Are AI-powered processes reinforcing inequalities or breaking them down?
- How do we ensure transparency and accountability in AI applications?

Ethical AI leadership requires courage—the courage to set clear boundaries, to question assumptions, and to course-correct when needed.

## 3. LIFELONG LEARNING AS THE NEW(ISH) IMPERATIVE

AI is transforming the way we work, and with it, the expectations placed on leaders. Lifelong learning is no longer a buzzword—it's a survival skill. Leaders and teams must evolve constantly to stay relevant in an environment where technological advancements outpace traditional skill cycles.

Leadership today means fostering a culture of continuous learning—one where adapting isn't a burden but a built-in part of how teams and organizations operate.

## 4. BALANCING TECH WITH HUMAN-CENTERED EMPATHY

Empathy, emotional intelligence, and human connection aren't becoming obsolete in the AI era—they're becoming more valuable. AI can process data, automate tasks, and even generate decisions, but it lacks the nuance of human judgment.

The challenge isn't about choosing between AI and human leadership—it's about integrating both meaningfully and keeping the "human in the loop". Leaders must use AI as an enabler while ensuring that human connection, ethical decision-making, and trust remain at the core of leadership.

## 5. EMPOWERING TEAMS FOR INNOVATION AND ADAPTION

Great teams thrive when given both the freedom to explore and the structure to stay aligned. But innovation doesn't happen in a vacuum—leaders must create an environment where experimentation is encouraged and failure is part of the learning process.

In the AI age, leadership isn't just about implementing technology; it's about fostering curiosity, adaptability, and a mindset that welcomes change. The ability to innovate isn't a job that can be outsourced—it must be nurtured from within.



### #3 AI for (Thought)Leaders: Writing Smarter, Not Harder 🖋️

Writing is one of the most powerful tools in a leader's toolkit.

It sharpens strategy, inspires teams, and shapes your voice inside and outside the organization. But finding the time to write clearly and strategically can be hard — especially when you're juggling a dozen other priorities.

That's where AI can support you. Not by replacing your voice, but by helping you organize your thinking, overcome blocks, and get ideas out faster.

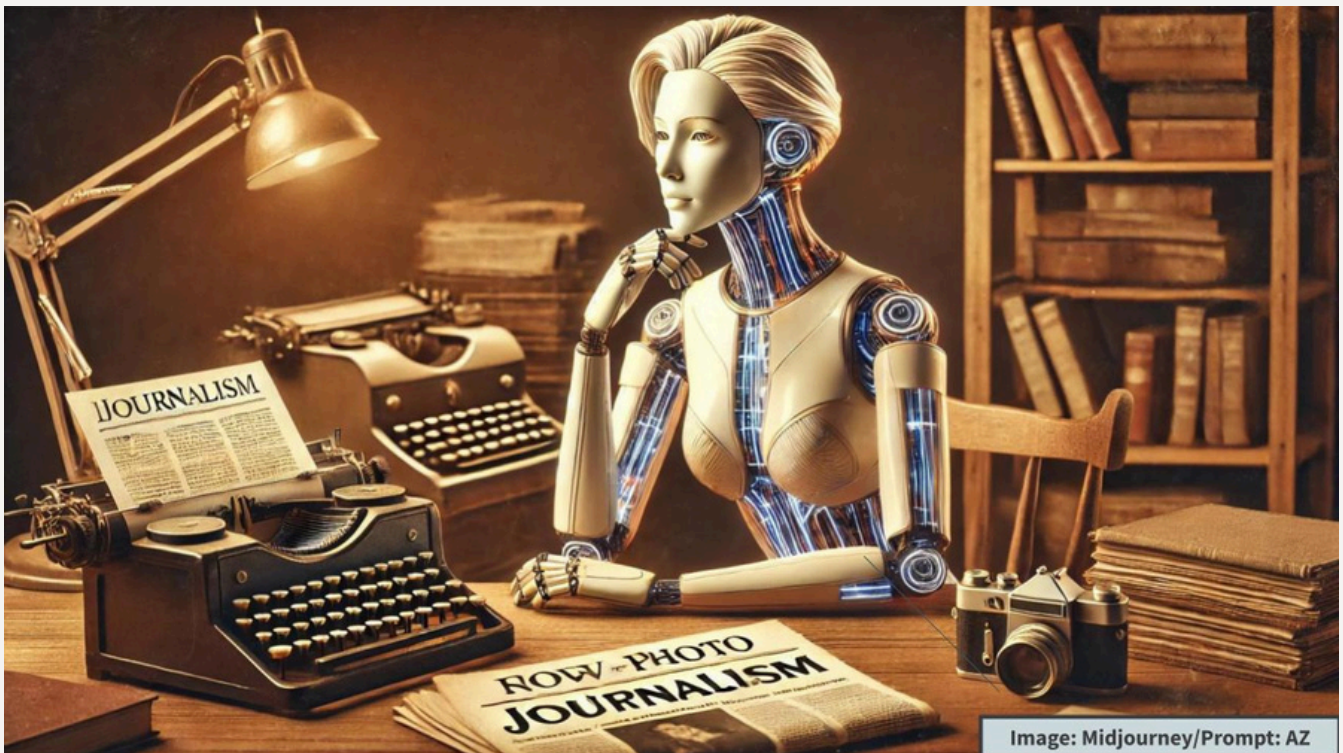


Image: Midjourney/Prompt: AZ

In the hands of a leader, writing is strategy, clarity, and influence.

## MAKE YOUR MESSAGE CLEARER

AI can help you sharpen drafts, clarify your message, and adapt your tone to different audiences — whether you're preparing internal updates, a strategy memo, or a LinkedIn post.

## STRUCTURE YOUR THINKING

Writing starts with clarity. AI can help unpack complex ideas, highlight gaps, and suggest alternate framings — turning vague thoughts into clear, strategic narratives.

## PUBLISH WITH PURPOSE

Good writing builds visibility, invites feedback, and strengthens your leadership brand. AI can support that process by offering prompts, trend analysis, or different angles to explore.

AI doesn't replace your voice — it can help you find it faster or amplify it.

## WHY LEADERS STRUGGLE TO WRITE (AND HOW AI CAN HELP)

### **No time to write**

AI tools can speed up the process — structuring ideas, generating drafts, or cleaning up language — so you can focus on the message.

### **Stuck in perfectionism**

AI can act as a thought partner — helping you refine structure, test arguments, and move from draft to done.

### **Too much noise**

When your brain is in execution mode, AI can offload small cognitive tasks — freeing space for reflection and strategic thinking.

### **Can't get started**

A blank page is tough. AI can offer first sentences, openers, or metaphors that help get the words flowing.

### **Not a natural writer**

Not everyone loves writing. But with the right prompts, AI can help shape your ideas into clear, professional text.

## FOUR WAYS TO KEEP AI-ASSISTED WRITING AUTHENTIC

**Match your voice:** Train custom GPTs on your writing samples — strategy docs, newsletters, or posts — so your drafts sound like you.

**Build a template library:** Use simple templates for emails, posts, or updates. AI can fill in the gaps while you focus on the substance.

**Edit intentionally:** AI-generated content should never be used blindly. Adjust tone, cut fluff, and sharpen the message so it reflects your values and thinking.

**Take time upfront:** Spending a day teaching AI your voice pays off in the long run — especially if writing is a regular part of your work

Use AI as a tool — not a shortcut. The best writing still needs your intent, your insight, and your leadership.

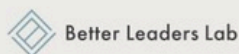
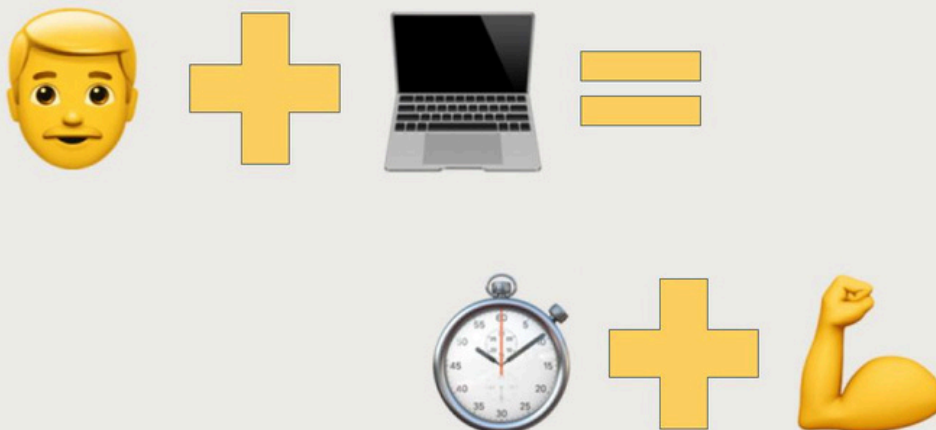
## #4 How AI Can Give Leaders a Competitive Edge in Market Analysis 📊

### The Challenge: Too Much Data, Too Little Time

Senior executives rarely have the luxury of reading every market report, financial statement, or trend analysis. But ignoring them isn't an option either.

The false choice? Spend days manually reviewing documents or rely on superficial secondhand summaries. The smarter alternative: Use AI as a research assistant to filter, extract, and synthesize key insights — while keeping accuracy and depth intact

### AI & HUMANS - Our Hope:



When we team up with smart tools, we don't lose our voice — we gain clarity, speed, and strength in how we lead.

## HOW AI MAKES MARKET AND COMPETITOR ANALYSIS MORE EFFICIENT

### 1. Smarter Tools, Better Insights

Not all AI tools are built for deep market research. Tools like NotebookLM and Perplexity stand out by offering verifiable sources and linked outputs.

They allow you to:

- Upload your own documents and avoid hallucinated results
- Receive summaries with exact source references (e.g., “See page 37 of the annual report”)
- Cross-check findings easily so you stay in control of what’s true and relevant
- Instead of sifting through endless reports, you can get a focused roadmap backed by documents you trust.

## 2. The Human–AI Balance: Avoiding Bias and Misinformation

AI can accelerate research — but it still needs human judgment. To use it responsibly:

- Choose tools that rely on reliable, transparent sources
- Write precise prompts that limit AI to your approved documents
- Keep decision-making with the humans — AI supports, but doesn’t replace strategic thinking

### Example 1: Analyzing the Long-Term Development of a Company

The New York Times publishes an annual report summarizing key developments in the company and the industry. AI can help analyze and compare the last 10 years of reports: Which topics have gained or lost importance? How did the revenue mix change? What strategic priorities have shifted?

✖ Without AI: Read 900 pages of annual reports.

✔ With AI: Use AI to uncover significant trends and shifts.

### Example 2: Comparing Financial Metrics of Competitors

Financial statements follow standardized formats, making them ideal for AI-driven analysis. With the right tools, executives can quickly assess: How are revenue streams and cost structure evolving at a competitor? Which assets are appreciating or depreciating? Are there cross-industry trends emerging across multiple companies?

✖ Without AI: Assign a junior analyst for a week or two.

✔ With AI: Extract key insights on an ongoing basis with recurring prompts.

### Example 3: Staying Ahead of the Curve

The pace of AI transformation is accelerating, and it’s covered widely. To keep up with all relevant reports from consultancies, universities and think tanks one would have to spend hours reading every day.

AI can:

- Aggregate findings from Google Alerts, RSS feeds, and internal reports.
- Generate weekly executive briefings on key developments.
- Act as a personalized news bot, delivering insights tailored to specific interests.

✖ Without AI: Spend hours reading reports daily (or ignore them).

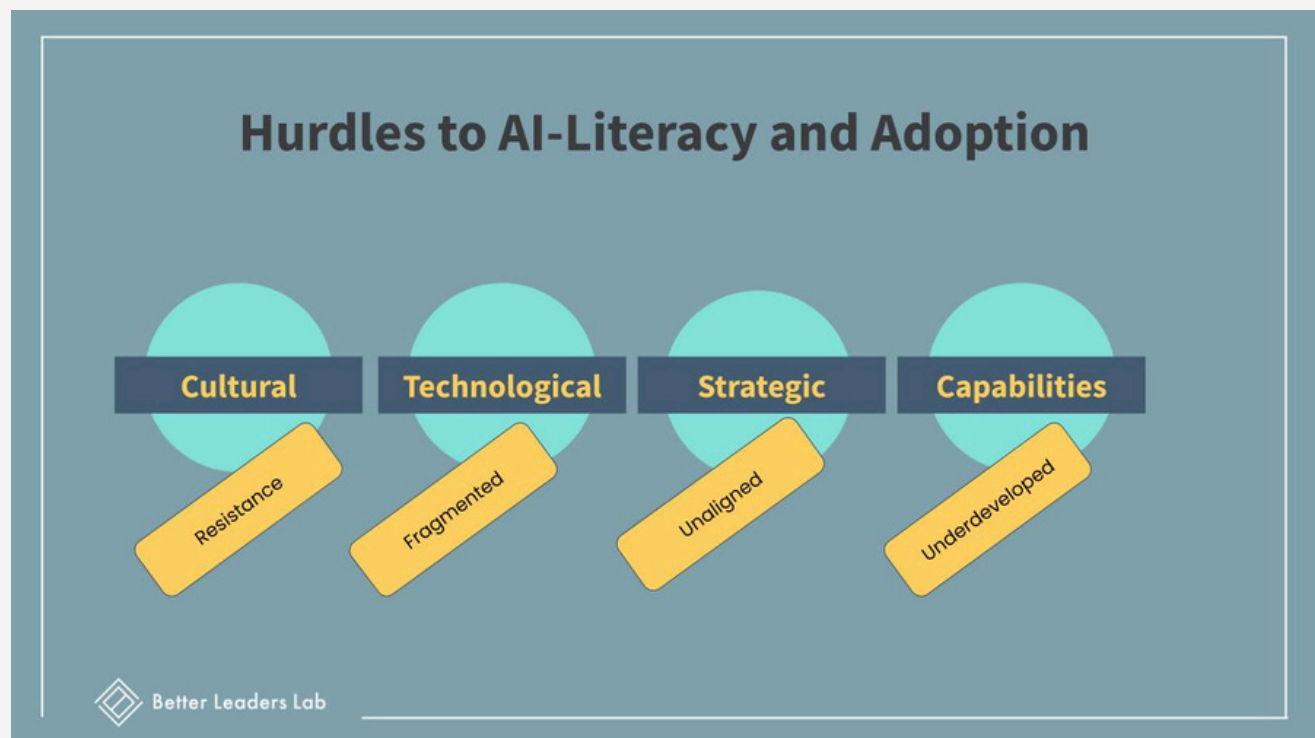
✔ With AI: Get concise, tailored updates on a regular basis.

## #5 What Skills Do Leaders Need in the Age of AI? 🎓

AI is impacting how we think, decide, and lead. And while the tools are advancing fast, the biggest challenge isn't the tech — it's building the right skills across leadership teams and organizations.

To bridge the gap between strategy and execution, leaders must make sure their teams — and they themselves — have the skills to turn ideas into impact.

Here's a simple framework we use with clients: a three-level competency model for AI skills in leadership, paired with four principles that make AI training stick.



From cultural resistance to underdeveloped capabilities, AI adoption depends on more than tech.

## THREE COMPETENCY LEVELS FOR LEADERS

**Every leader — regardless of department or industry — should understand the fundamentals of AI.**

This doesn't mean becoming a developer, but it does mean:

- Grasping how AI reshapes business models and value chains
- Understanding what generative AI is and how it works
- Using tools like ChatGPT hands-on to understand potential and limitations

These skills are non-negotiable. They're the new literacy for modern leadership.

### **Power Users with Advanced AI Expertise**

Every team needs leaders who go deeper — applying AI to their specific context and driving change from within. These power users:

- Build on baseline skills with role-specific understanding
- Explore how AI transforms their domain (e.g. product, comms, finance)
- Act as internal champions and connect daily practice with strategic goals
- They're often the bridge between experimentation and implementation.

### **AI Experts as Specialists in the Company**

These are your high-level experts — either recruited or developed internally. They lead on:

- Developing company-wide AI strategies
- Building internal tools or proprietary models
- Guiding governance, risk, and ethical considerations

They're often part of centralized AI teams or embedded in departments. They're not the majority — but they're essential.

## **FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL AI TRAINING IN ORGANIZATIONS**

**Create a Sense of Urgency:** AI readiness isn't optional. Leaders must take responsibility for setting the tone — not just encouraging learning, but modeling it.

**Make Learning a Journey, Not a Session:** AI changes fast. One-off training doesn't cut it. Build learning into the culture with regular check-ins, updates, and reflection.

**Measure What Matters:** Set clear goals for what success looks like. Are people not just attending workshops but actually applying what they've learned?

**Close the Gap Between Knowing and Doing:** Too much AI training stays theoretical. The real value comes when leaders apply skills to real decisions, strategies, and workflows.

## **AI SKILLS = STRATEGIC CAPACITY**

AI isn't just a technical topic — it's a core leadership capability. Whether you're leading a team, a department, or a company, your ability to navigate this shift will depend on what you know, what you practice, and what you model.

**Structured upskilling is no longer a nice-to-have. It's the core of the strategy.**

## #6 Empathy and AI: Preserving Humanity in Leadership 🧡

### **Empathy Isn't Obsolete — It's a Competitive Advantage**

The assumption that technology drives empathy out of leadership is widespread — but it doesn't have to be true. When used intentionally, AI can support more human-centered leadership by offering reminders, reflection prompts, and communication insights.

The key is what leaders choose to automate — and where they keep humans in the loop.

Can she 🤖 show more empathy than  
your average human manager?



## **3 DECISIONS THAT SHAPE EMPATHETIC LEADERSHIP WITH AI**

### **How Much Humanity Do We Keep in the Process?**

Leaders decide how deeply AI is embedded into sensitive workflows — from team check-ins to performance reviews. Technology isn't empathetic or inhumane by default. It reflects the priorities we assign to it.

### **How Can AI Support, Not Replace, Human Connection?**

AI can help leaders prepare for difficult moments, spot blind spots, and communicate with more care. It's not about replacing leadership — it's about equipping it.

### **How Do We Prompt AI With Empathy in Mind?**

AI responds to the signals it's given. If we build empathy into how we use it — through intentional prompts and values-based framing — it reflects those choices.



Leadership isn't just about using AI. It's about managing how it's used.

## EMPATHY AS A HUMAN SUPERPOWER — WITH A LITTLE BACKUP

AI can't feel, but it can help remind us to. Used wisely, AI becomes a prompt for better leadership.

- Reminders: Nudges to shift perspective before giving feedback or making decisions
- Simulations: Tools like Difficult Conversations GPT help rehearse hard conversations in advance
- Tone coaching: Suggestions to make language more inclusive, respectful, or reflective

## WHAT SKILLS DO EMPATHETIC LEADERS NEED IN AN AI-DRIVEN WORKPLACE?

### Self-Reflection on Strengths and Gaps

Empathetic leadership starts with knowing yourself. Where are you strong? Where do you need support? AI can help you spot patterns in how you lead — but only if you're open to seeing them.

### Conscious Use of AI as a Sparring Partner

AI is useful in moments of reflection — preparing feedback, testing tone, or thinking through hard decisions. But the impact depends on how intentionally you use it.

### Confidence With Practical Tools

From conversation simulators to tone checkers, new tools are emerging to support real leadership work. Leaders need training, context, and space to try them — not just toolkits, but real learning environments.

## AI AS AN EMPATHY AMPLIFIER — NOT A SUBSTITUTE

Empathy is still one of the most powerful leadership skills — and in an AI-saturated world, it matters more than ever. AI can't feel. But it can support more reflective, responsive, and intentional leadership if we choose to use it that way.

In the end, empathetic leadership isn't something we outsource. It's something we protect — and strengthen — by being deliberate in how we lead with and alongside AI.

AI won't fix bad leadership. If empathy isn't a real priority, no tool can make up for that. For those already leading with care, though, AI can be a powerful amplifier.

## #7 Making Better Managerial Decisions with AI

### AI Can Support — But Not Replace — Leadership Judgment

AI can help leaders make better decisions by surfacing patterns, structuring facts, and mapping out possible outcomes. But in the end, leadership is about responsibility. And no tool can replace that.

This guide explores how AI can strengthen your decision-making — without taking over.



Use AI not to decide for you, but to think with you.

### AI AS A STRATEGIC SUPPORT TOOL

Leaders face complex decisions every day — often under pressure, in isolation, and with limited time. AI can support the process by making it more structured and intentional.

A thoughtful decision process typically includes:

- Gathering facts: AI can sort large datasets and highlight what matters
- Assessing scenarios: AI can identify patterns, compare trade-offs, and flag risks
- Aligning with strategy and values: AI can help weigh options against goals

The final call always rests with the leader. AI can help you act faster and more confidently — but it doesn't carry the weight of the outcome.

A common trap: A good result doesn't always mean the decision was good. AI helps improve the process, not just the outcome.

## AI AS AN UNBIASED SPARRING PARTNER

In leadership, finding truly neutral advice is hard. HR, legal, finance, and even peers bring their own agendas and perspectives.

AI can help you:

- See options from different angles
- Explore trade-offs without internal bias
- Test assumptions and uncover alternatives

Especially in strategic planning, AI can serve as a clear-headed second opinion — not emotionally involved, not politically constrained.

## AI FOR SMARTER SCENARIO PLANNING

Scenario planning isn't just about guessing the future. It's about mapping out possibilities and making them actionable.

AI can support this by:

- Scanning industry and market data
- Comparing historical trends with current signals
- Highlighting new risks or opportunities you might overlook

You still decide which path to follow. But AI helps you prepare for more of what might come.

## KNOW WHEN TO QUESTION AI'S OUTPUT

AI is helpful — but not flawless.

It can surface insights, but it can also miss nuance or introduce bias depending on the data it was trained on. That's why leaders must stay curious and critical when reviewing AI-generated analysis.

Use AI to:

- Challenge assumptions
- Reveal blind spots
- Offer "Devil's Advocate" scenarios

Don't outsource your judgment. AI is a thinking partner — not a decision-maker.

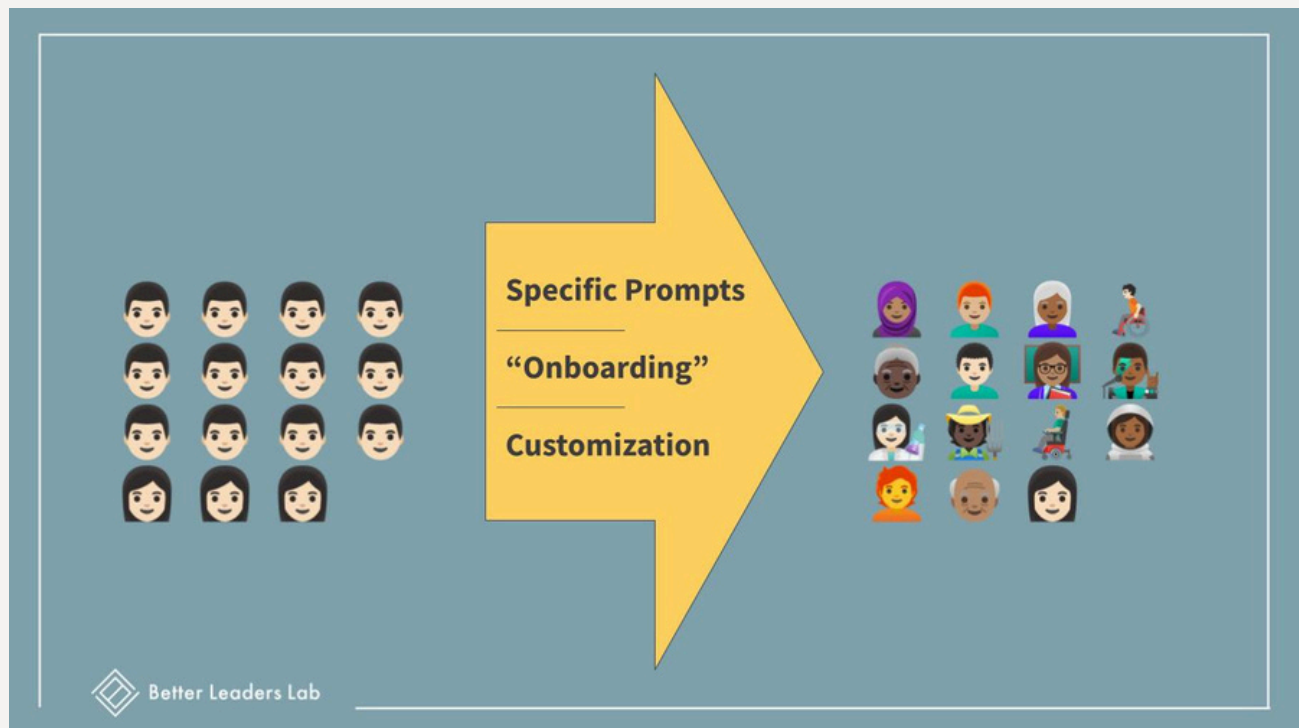
Great leadership isn't about speed or certainty. It's about clarity, responsibility, and strategic intent.

## #8 Using AI to Center Equity and Identify Biases 🌈

### AI Can Reinforce Bias — Or Help You Fight It

AI isn't inherently fair or unfair. It reflects the world, as well as the biases we feed into it. That means it may mirror and even amplify discrimination - but it can also help us detect, question, and reduce bias if we choose to use it that way.

As leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure AI becomes a tool for inclusion - not exclusion. It's no excuse that out of the box tools are often mirroring inequalities: We need to put in the work to make our processes (and our AI) better.



With the right prompts, onboarding, and customization, AI becomes as diverse, helpful, and human-centered as the people it serves.

## AI REFLECTS THE WORLD WE BUILD

One of the biggest myths about AI is that it's neutral. In reality:

- AI mirrors the data it's trained on — which often reflects historical inequality
- Most models are developed by homogenous teams that may not prioritize equity
- Early studies show prompting and usage patterns tend to reflect dominant cultural norms

AI systems don't create bias from nowhere. They scale what we put into them — and what we allow them to do.

## LEADERSHIP MEANS EMBEDDING EQUITY IN AI USE

Bias won't fix itself. It takes conscious leadership to build equity into how we use AI.

This includes:

- Choosing tools that allow transparency and source control
- Embedding inclusive framing and language into prompts
- Being critical about how AI is used in hiring, content creation, analysis, and planning

Using AI deliberately is not a DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging) strategy on its own — but it can become a meaningful part of one.

## AI AS A BIAS DETECTOR AND INCLUSION CHECK

AI can support more inclusive decisions when used intentionally. For example:

- Reviewing job descriptions, speeches, or memos for exclusionary language
- Analyzing hiring flows or policies for hidden barriers
- Running internal documents through a bias lens — scanning for tone, accessibility, and structure
- Asking AI to highlight blind spots and act as a “Devil’s Advocate” in decision-making

When used well, AI can become a mirror — and a prompt — for more equitable thinking.

## AI AS AN ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY TOOL

AI can help organizations with limited DEIB resources take meaningful action. For example:

- Simplifying and clarifying content for broader accessibility
- Helping small teams improve communication tone and structure
- Making inclusive practices more scalable across hiring, onboarding, and internal comms

While human-led equity work is still essential, AI lowers the barrier to entry — giving more teams the chance to start, improve, and grow.

## THE ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERS

Bias isn't a tech problem. It's a leadership challenge.

- AI can't make your team inclusive — but it can help you see where you're falling short
- It won't “solve” equity — but it can support reflection, identify risk, and prompt action
- Modern leadership means actively using AI to spot and challenge bias — not passively accepting its limitations

The question isn't whether bias exists — It's what you choose to do about it.

Equity doesn't happen by default. It happens by design — and by asking better questions.

## **THREE QUESTIONS TO CHECK WHETHER YOUR AI USE SUPPORTS EQUITY**

Use these as a quick check when you're integrating AI into leadership, hiring, communication, or decision-making processes.

### **Who benefits — and who might be left out?**

Is your use of AI creating access and opportunity for more people, or reinforcing the same patterns and defaults?

### **What assumptions are baked into the data or prompts?**

Are you asking questions that reflect diverse perspectives, or only your own? Are the sources inclusive and up to date?

### **Are you replacing reflection — or supporting it?**

Are you using AI to bypass tough conversations or decisions, or to sharpen your awareness and improve your outcomes?

## #9 Rethinking Recruiting and Talent Management with AI

### What If HR Was Designed for Humans — With AI's Help?

From job postings to onboarding to long-term retention, most talent processes feel overdue for an upgrade. They're slow, inconsistent, and often unintentionally exclusive.

AI can help. Used with intention, it can improve both the efficiency and equity of how we find, support, and grow talent. Not by removing the human element — but by making it easier to focus on what matters most.

AI can't replace great people practices — but it can help you scale them.



It's time to move from boring, bureaucratic, and broken to equitable, engaging, and effective recruiting processes.



## REDUCING FRICTION IN RECRUITING

For candidates, hiring often feels slow and impersonal. For teams, it's overwhelming and time-consuming. AI can help streamline the early stages of recruiting by:

- Structuring workflows to reduce administrative load
- Screening applications faster and more consistently
- Highlighting stronger matches earlier in the process

When used well, AI frees up time for real conversation — not automated rejection.

## DESIGNING MORE INCLUSIVE JOB POSTINGS

Bias in job ads often goes unnoticed — but it limits who applies before you even begin. AI can help by:

- Reviewing language from different perspectives (e.g. gender, age, ability)
- Rewriting ads to reach more diverse, qualified candidates
- Identifying phrases that may unintentionally exclude certain groups

Inclusive hiring starts with inclusive language — and AI can help scale that effort.

## MAKING ONBOARDING MORE STRUCTURED AND SCALABLE

Too often, onboarding is inconsistent or overwhelming. AI can help improve the experience by:

- Delivering tailored onboarding content and training
- Answering common questions through internal chatbots
- Guiding new hires through tools, teams, and cultural norms

This isn't about automating welcome emails — it's about freeing up time for human connection.

## UNCOVERING AND DEVELOPING HIDDEN TALENT

Busy teams often overlook internal strengths and career development. AI can support growth by:

- Acting as a light-touch career coach that prompts reflection
- Offering playful, low-stakes check-ins on interests and goals
- Mapping skills to opportunities employees might not see on their own

This doesn't replace a real development conversation — it helps make sure one happens.

## SUPPORTING RETENTION THROUGH DATA AND DIALOGUE

Engagement doesn't vanish overnight — it erodes slowly and often invisibly. AI can help leaders:

- Track check-in data and patterns in team mood or sentiment
- Spot early signs of overload or disengagement
- Turn surface-level input into actionable insights

The leader still makes the move — AI helps show where and when.

## RETHINKING HR WITH HUMAN IN THE LOOP

The best use of AI in HR isn't full automation — it's strategic support. That means:

- Offloading repetitive admin work
- Identifying blind spots faster
- Opening new channels for feedback and reflection

**Smart and forward thinking talent strategy starts by asking 3 questions:**

- Where can AI remove friction?
- Where can it amplify fairness?
- Where can it make space for better conversations?

## About Anita Zielina

Anita Zielina is an experienced digital media executive, strategic advisor and board member with a focus on digital transformation, modern leadership and management, and product and business strategy.

She is the founder and CEO of Better Leaders Lab, a Do-and-Think Tank for good leadership and smart management that also acts as a boutique consultancy firm. Anita is an Executive in Residence at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY in NYC and serves as a non-executive board member at Mediahuis, as well as the News Product Alliance (NPA). She holds an Executive MBA from INSEAD and a Master's in Law from the University of Vienna and is an alumna of the JSK Journalism Fellowship at Stanford University and the Reuters Institute Visiting Fellowship at the University of Oxford.

## About Better Leaders Lab

Better Leaders Lab is a Do-and-Think Tank and strategic advisory firm for good leadership and smart management in media and beyond.

Founded in 2023 by Anita Zielina, the Lab offers tailored leadership development, management training, business consulting and strategic support for leadership teams.

Better Leaders Lab customers are companies, foundations and associations from the media, communications, non-profit and technology sectors in the USA and Europe.

The Better Leaders Lab Academy, as part of the Lab, offers executive education courses that empower leaders to make better strategic decisions and sustainably transform their organisations. The courses are designed as custom, small group learning experiences that bring together digital and media leaders to confidentially discuss business transformation, management or leadership issues.

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