

Chapter 13

Change Management and Skills Development in the Age of AI

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) is now emerging as a driver of organizational transformation, revolutionizing management models, work patterns, and human relationships within companies. While its potential for innovation, efficiency, and competitiveness is undeniable, its integration is prompting profound changes in skills and organizational structures. The success of this transition hinges on companies' ability to implement human-centered change management that reconciles technological progress with ethical considerations. This chapter explores the dynamics of organizational change in the AI era, drawing on both classic (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1996) and contemporary (Hiatt & Creasey, 2021; Barabel & Meier, 2023) models, while highlighting the new skills to be developed: digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, and adaptability.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant technological promise; it has become a powerful force that is already reshaping economies, organizations, and

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everyday work. As part of a broader wave of digital innovation, AI is transforming value chains, employment patterns, and labor relations (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2021; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). In line with Schumpeter's (1942) idea of creative destruction, this transformation brings both progress and disruption. While AI offers unprecedented opportunities to improve productivity and decision-making, it also generates deep human, managerial, and ethical challenges that organizations can no longer ignore.

The impact of AI goes far beyond technological change. It alters how organizations are structured, how decisions are made, and what it means to be competent at work (Borenstein & Howard, 2023). Traditional hierarchical models are increasingly questioned, and organizations are compelled to rethink how they manage change. In this context, change management can no longer be treated as a one-time response to innovation; it must be understood as a continuous process of learning, adjustment, and collective sense-making. In other words, the ability to manage change has become a strategic asset in itself.

Yet, the reality of digital transformation remains paradoxical. Despite massive investments in AI and digital tools, many organizations struggle to translate technology into real performance gains. McKinsey (2023) shows that nearly 70% of digital transformation initiatives fail, not because of technical shortcomings, but because of human and organizational barriers such as resistance to change, skills gaps, and the absence of a shared vision. This highlights a crucial point: technological success depends above all on people's ability and willingness to adopt and integrate new ways of working.

These difficulties are closely linked to the fears and uncertainties generated by AI. Many employees worry about being replaced by machines, losing control over their work, or seeing their skills become obsolete (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023). At the same time, the growing role of data and automation makes work environments more complex, requiring employees to develop hybrid profiles that combine technical knowledge with cognitive and social capabilities (Barabel, 2023). In this context, training and skills development are no longer optional—they are essential conditions for organizational sustainability.

Change management theories offer useful lenses for understanding these dynamics. Lewin's (1951) model of unfreezing, change, and refreezing remains relevant for describing how organizations move away from old routines and stabilize new ones. Kotter's (1996) eight-step model further emphasizes the importance of leadership, urgency, and the consolidation of change. More recently, the ADKAR framework (Hiatt & Creasey, 2021) has highlighted the individual dimension of change, focusing on awareness, motivation, knowledge, and capability. However, in the age of AI, these models must be revisited to account for the ethical, cognitive, and technological complexity of contemporary transformations.

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