



MARLIN HAWK

Marlin Hawk Playbook

Embedding AI Into the Workforce:
What CEOs Must Understand Now

Introduction

Whether or not your organisation has formally adopted AI at the enterprise level, your workforce already has. By now, employees are using tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, and Claude – some to streamline tasks and ideate faster, others to make strategic decisions or draft client-facing material. Some are using it well, but many are not. And that's the inflection point every CEO needs to confront.

Without the adequate thought behind training, governance, or guidance, unregulated AI use can degrade your company's data security, intellectual property, and reputational standing. Feeding sensitive information into external models, producing biased outputs, or acting on deviated results aren't just compliance risks, but also cultural risks. The issue isn't if your teams are using AI. It's how, and whether they're doing it in a way that moves your employees and business forward.

As New York Times and #1 Wall Street Journal Bestselling Author Stephen M.R. Covey explained: "AI is not a replacement for people; it's an enabler to unleash people."

When used right, AI becomes a digital chief of staff and business partner. It accelerates research, expands creativity, and enhances decision-making. From customer support bots using Machine Learning (ML) to draft better responses, to analysts automating repetitive reporting to find trends in the data, AI can elevate human performance when aligned with purpose.

With two decades of leadership in technology search, we are uniquely positioned to navigate the ongoing AI transformation across the corporate world. So, what is our advice to CEOs on the bleeding edge of change?

01



Establish clear policies and environments where experimentation is encouraged but controlled...

Organisations that get AI adoption right allow their people to explore, but within guardrails that ensure proper use, data protection, risk mitigation, and ethical boundaries. DBS Bank in Singapore introduced AI in customer service through limited-scope pilots before scaling. The bank didn't just "deploy a chatbot". It created a testing environment, validated the model's behaviour, ensured regulatory compliance, and only then expanded. This approach allowed teams to learn and iterate without putting the brand or data at risk. Last year, DBS deployed a Gen AI assistant to support 500 Customer Service Officers (CSOs), helping serve over 250,000 monthly customer queries in Singapore.

Phase 1: Ensure your company has good AI Hygiene – are you using AI properly and is it compliant?

AI is a business strategy, not an IT project for the latest technology...

Too many organisations treat AI as an experimental add-on – use it how you want, when you want. But it's a capability that needs to be embedded into the core of strategy, operations and decision-making. When Levi Strauss began experimenting with AI to predict fashion trends and optimise inventory, it wasn't only the tech team that got involved. Marketing, design, and operations all had roles to play. The implementation of AI significantly reduced lead times and optimised its supply chain network, resulting in cost and time benefits.



02

Phase 2: Discover what productivity gains you can acquire from AI. Boston Consulting Group (BCG) see up to 20% gains per day, ranging from analysis, repetitive tasks, coding, and even meetings and administrative work.

03



Treat generative AI as a Chief of Staff and a cross-functional enabler...

Think of AI not just as automation and efficiency, but as a *Digital Chief of Staff*: an always-on, cross-functional expert capable of supporting every part of the business, from finance to comms. When it's engrained across roles, it becomes a force multiplier for employee potential. Take a look at Stich Fix's "Hybrid Design". Using algorithms to identify style gaps and suggest new designs based on customer preferences, human designers then review and approve these ideas, blending AI insights with creative judgment for more relevant, personalised fashion offerings.

Phase 3: Make everyone an "AI Manager", or elevate AI to be everyone's Chief of Staff. Everyone, including individual contributors, can become AI Managers and gain a direct report: their AI tools. Utilise them like a Chief of Staff, with daily regular check-ins to check and deepen your thinking.

Upskill your workforce not just in AI tools, but in judgment, ethics, and data fluency...

AI training should go beyond technical instruction. Employees need to understand how to interpret AI output, question its reliability, and use it ethically. In 2023, PwC announced a \$1 billion investment to upskill its 65,000 U.S. employees in AI and other emerging technologies over three years. It includes not just a focus on technical skills, but an explicit focus on responsible AI, grounded in the belief that judgment and context are as important as proficiency.

"Upskilling isn't just about knowing how to use AI—it's about knowing when not to trust it," said PwC's U.S. Chair Tim Ryan.

Phase 4: Employ AI as a Chief Learning Officer. BCG's report found that AI LLMs (Large Language Models) can help train and upskill people – use AI to fill the AI knowledge gap in your organisation.



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Decide whether you're using AI to cut costs, to improve efficiency or to build long-term intellectual advantage; each are very different strategies...

Short-term efficiency plays (like automating workflows or cost cutting) are valid, but they should be balanced against longer-term learnings and strategies that help build proprietary capabilities, insight, and brand differentiation. Moderna, the biotech firm behind one of the first COVID-19 vaccines, has positioned AI as a core enabler of speed, innovation, and scientific discovery. Before the pandemic, Moderna built an AI-enabled platform to design and simulate mRNA sequences, drastically reducing experimentation cycles. During COVID, this infrastructure allowed Moderna to go from virus sequencing to clinical-grade vaccine candidate in just 42 days, a once previously unimaginable pace.

Phase 5: Challenge each executive to articulate how AI will change their function over five years. What tool they adopt isn't important, but the lasting impact and capabilities it builds does. Shift the mindset from deployment to reinvention.

The bleeding edge isn't about waiting for the perfect tool, technology or policy. It's about acting with clarity today. Build a culture where AI is used safely, skilfully, and strategically. The future workforce will be shaped not by the AI tools they use, but by the leadership that empowered them to use those tools with vision and purpose.

Our talent solutions help leaders respond to the **rapid transformations** taking place across global industries.

01

Executive Search

Build sustainable and diverse leadership teams for long-term success

4 - 6 Weeks

02

Strategic Intelligence

Advise on the organisational strategies and structures to help bring next generation talent on board

Compensation Analysis

4 - 6 Weeks

Structural Analysis

8 - 10 Weeks

Talent Analysis

Up to 18 Months

03

Interim Management

Catalyse transformation with temporary hires to fill immediate talent gaps

2 - 3 Weeks

About Marlin Hawk

Marlin Hawk is a global leadership advisory firm specializing in executive search, strategic intelligence, and interim management. For over 20 years, we've empowered our clients with data and insights to make diverse, inclusive and impactful leadership decisions. One globally connected team, we are headquartered in **London** with offices in **New York, Denver, Toronto, Chicago, Amsterdam, Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong**. Unconstrained by a one-size-fits-all approach to both clients and candidates, we build relationships with care and attention to detail, while delivering at pace.