# LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

## THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF LEADERSHIP FOR THE AI ERA

## WHITEPAPER

WRITTEN BY CLAIRE KORYCZAN
ISSUED JUNE 2025

IMAGINE BEYOND

# Contents


03 Overview

05 A complex challenge

06 Power of connection

07 Automation and exploration

09 Collaboration

10 Entrepreneurial mindset

15 About Imagine Beyond

In a workplace era defined by rapid technological advancement and constant disruption, will traditional leadership models be challenged like never before?

This whitepaper is written for those steering organisations, CEOs, CFOs, and HR leaders, through the AI era, where leadership evolution is no longer optional.

‘Leading through Change: The Next Evolution of Leadership for the AI Era’ explores how today’s leaders must adapt by embracing innovation, cultivating agility, and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset to stay ahead in a workplace shaped by artificial intelligence and shifting cultural expectations.

Claire Koryczan, Founder & Director at Imagine Beyond®, examines the evolving demands of leadership and discusses the human qualities AI just cannot replace. This paper offers practical insights for those ready to lead with openness and vision. It explores how leaders can motivate and harness the potential of their teams in a world increasingly dominated by technology.

Claire

**Workplaces are transforming, and Generative AI is rapidly replacing entire job roles. Combined with this, new generations bring different professional perspectives from those who preceded them, and innovation is accelerating at lightning speed. The challenge leaders now face is remaining agile and resourceful amongst increasing change and uncertainty.**

We hear so much top-down debate about how AI is augmenting and replacing jobs, with perspectives on how we should respond to this as businesses, within industries, and as individuals. While some feel like this evolution is beyond their control, especially those in roles where AI has been shown to effectively automate much of their day-to-day, others are championing the pace of innovation, moving towards this rather than away.

This has caused a divide in the level of openness to exploring these technological advancements, with some fearful for their future careers, while others are a driving force behind Generative AI uptake within their organisations.

With lots of conversation about what the future world of work looks like amidst this change and vast AI adoption, rarely do we question what AI's integration into the workplace means for the leadership of tomorrow.

Imagine Beyond asks, will the vast expansion of AI into businesses and our everyday lives pave the way for better leadership, or will it result in fewer leaders? The latter, of course, could result in fewer meaningful connections and a lack of role models for the next generation. Could we even see a new era of management whereby your leader is a group of AI agents? Quite possibly.

# A complex challenge

The challenge this presents is complex. We already know AI can help teams automate tasks and speed up processes – essentially helping businesses streamline workload by driving innovation and enhancing problem-solving. But can it ever replace the human essentials of trust, empathy, emotional intelligence, and adaptability? Generative AI is already evolving in this direction, gradually building trust through its interactions and the way it engages with humans.

However, we must remember that AI does not, and will never, prioritise relationships or connect the dots in the exact same way human imaginative thinking does. It's programmed to simulate the former, but the reality is that it cannot. The watch out for us is that human nature is predisposed to form meaningful relationships, so we must act mindfully in our interactions with technology and remember that it is not, and will never be, human.

With all these factors redefining the workplace, the real question is no longer if companies should embrace AI and remain open to new ways of working, but how we can effectively integrate and collaborate with these tools within our businesses without losing that all-important human touch. Remembering that these systems are inspired by and built from human intelligence.

Research* from the National Business Research Institute indicates that employee satisfaction increases by nearly 50% when a worker develops a close relationship in the workplace, suggesting that leaders who encourage workplace friendships can also significantly boost job satisfaction, increase trust, and productivity, which positively impacts the bottom line.

*Research: https://www.nbrii.com/employee-survey-white-papers/the-truth-about-job-satisfaction-and-friendships-at-work

# Power of connection

**Connection and building relationships:**
**The science behind interaction**

As human beings, it is in our nature to seek connection and interaction with others. We are a social species, and because of this, the limbic system in the human brain is hardwired for us to develop bonds that foster belonging and build trust for survival. It's in our biology and within the mammalian part of the brain.

Daniel Siegel brilliantly articulated this observation in his book 'Mindsight'. If you have ever had a pet cat or dog, a lizard or a fish, you will know the difference - the former bonds with you. The latter just shares your space. With cats, dogs, and humans, this is your limbic system, your emotional centre in action, enabling you to form connections with each other.

Interestingly, a Harvard Business Review article* published in April 2025 details that the most common use of Generative AI in the past 12 months is 'Therapy/Companionship', further supporting the narrative that even in a digitally-powered world, we are still seeking real-life connection. And when we don't have it with each other, tech plays a role.

When Generative AI tools exploded onto the scene in the public consciousness, they had the fastest uptake in the history of any platform. ChatGPT crossed the one million user mark in just five days after it was launched in November 2022, and its growth is unparalleled, with it now achieving approximately 5.19 billion visits per month**. Starting from $0 in revenue in 2022 to $4 billion by 2024. There is no doubt that it has rapidly become woven into the fabric of work.

*Article: https://hbr.org/2025/04/how-people-are-really-using-gen-ai-in-2025*
***ChatGPT: https://explodingtopics.com/blog/chatgpt-users*
**** AI Trends Report 2025, by Mark Meeker*

# Automation & exploration

What we are experiencing here is a rapid reshaping of how we work, but the challenge now is not just about keeping up – it's about how we, as humans, can stay consciously engaged.

**Automation and exploration: The finite balance**

As businesses embrace further automation, there's a growing risk of slipping into cognitive autopilot, relying too heavily on AI to do the heavy lifting, while critical thinking, outside-in inspiration, creativity, and problem-solving quietly fade into the background. When this happens, we miss a trick. As neuroscience tells us, 'neurons that fire together, wire together', meaning that over time, we risk rewiring our brains into passive, habitual behaviours instead of engaging in more active, adaptive problem-solving that keeps us cognitively sharp.

Therefore, empowering your teams to engage mindfully with Generative AI systems is helpful to avoid diminishing these capabilities. Strategies can include mindful participation and encouraging your teams to assess and question AI-generated suggestions critically. We know these tools are scraping information from the internet and collating it into their outputs, so bias can, and often does, creep in.

A direct example of this would be pushing Generative AI platforms to ensure that any image results that feature people are representative. These platforms have been criticised* for their lack of diversity compared to real-world populations, tending to generate fewer images of underrepresented groups.

**Yang, Y. Racial bias in AI-generated images. AI & Soc (2025) - link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-025-02282-1#citeas*

This has been attributed to the training data and algorithms used by these models, so questioning generated suggestions beyond the first response, while collaborating and co-creating together, ensures individuals remain engaged and active in the decision-making process and consciously active in driving inclusive outputs.

Fostering an environment of curiosity and continuous learning enables your people to remain adaptable to evolve and develop the relevant skills needed to fulfil their changing roles, without relying solely on Generative AI's capabilities.

While many professionals are utilising AI to maximise productivity, a large proportion are still worried about what purpose this might leave them with in the workplace. The Future of Jobs Global Report* 2025 revealed that 41% of companies are planning for workforce reductions as artificial intelligence expands.

These findings are reflective of widespread unease among employees worldwide. In addition to this, nearly half of knowledge workers expressed concern over job displacement due to AI.

*Report: https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/future-of-jobs-report-2025-jobs-of-the-future-and-the-skills-you-need-to-get-them

# Collaboration

**Fostering collaboration amongst your teams**

As we collaborate further with these systems, leaders now have a huge opportunity to bring their people together to create more connections in the workplace outside of technology, helping to define the point of difference and purpose humans have within work, amidst rapid technological advancements. A way to do this is by creating intentionally curated experiences that strengthen human bonds in spaces where people get together in person for collaborative learning and shared engagements.

Research* from Atlassian in early 2024 found that in a survey of Fortune 500 executives, every leader asked, reported that most employees no longer work from the same office as their team members.

This data showed that while remote work is the reality, in-person team collaboration and maximising opportunities for in-person rapport building and team cohesion are beneficial. Atlassian data showed that bringing teams together to deliver and advance on key projects boosts team connection more than sporadic office attendance. Their data also outlined that in-person interaction makes team members feel better about their productivity, communication, and effectiveness, thereby increasing their overall engagement.

*Research: atlassian.com/blog/distributed-work/intentional-togetherness-research

# Entreprenuerial mindset

At Imagine Beyond, we believe that during times of change, tapping into your entrepreneurial mindset and seeing challenges as opportunities can make the biggest difference when uniting your team to navigate these times.

Strengthening emotional intelligence is essential, as both remote and in-person work environments affect our ability to read social cues, interpret context, and learn from others effectively.

Adopting an 'entrepreneurial' mindset will help you overcome today's challenges, especially in an AI-driven world where human qualities like vision, empathy, and integrity remain irreplaceable. These timeless skills bring meaning and purpose to our work, something technology alone cannot replicate.

Within this whitepaper, we further explore how the power of an entrepreneurial leadership style, alongside utilising the capabilities of AI, will help future-proof your business, build confidence within your teams, and help you as a leader navigate accelerating change.

Over many years, we've been decoding and defining leadership behaviours. Working with and alongside leaders, exploring what goes into the making of an entrepreneurial mindset.

The good news is, we don't think it's something you do or don't have: we believe everyone has some of these characteristics and qualities - because they are innate in all of us, and when we lean further towards them, they enable you to strengthen your leadership toolkit and confidently lead through complex change.

**What does leading with an entrepreneurial mindset look like?**

An entrepreneurial mindset builds on the qualities of a growth mindset. It looks for ways to improve, drive growth, and find new ways to add value for the business, employees, and customers.

Entrepreneurial leaders seek opportunities, especially throughout periods of change, when this is often the most fertile ground for growth. They are agile, curious, adaptive, and resourceful, open to learning and experimenting to find new approaches to solve problems.

When faced with difficult situations, entrepreneurial leaders turn the problem into an opportunity, galvanising their people in the process.

You can read more about the qualities we have identified here and assess which resonate the most with you.

**How can dialling up this mindset help you lead in the AI era?**

Now more than ever, navigating technological change requires creativity, resourcefulness, and a willingness to experiment, combining thinking like a scientist and an artist. As AI continues to evolve, it's asking big questions of us: Where does the human value fit in? And could AI eventually lead organisations themselves?

That is a challenging, almost existential question, but for now, let's focus on how AI can amplify human capacity and leadership qualities, rather than replace them. Because human value lies less in the predictable tasks machines can handle, and more in the intangible and creative dimensions where instinct, originality, and emotional depth thrive.

The key to bridging this existential question is developing AI literacy through education and understanding how to use these tools optimally.

At Imagine Beyond, we often talk about the most important skills for leaders being an entrepreneurial mindset to foster innovation and create growth opportunities while managing and leading people brilliantly. All of which are essential for a competitive advantage.

Accessible entrepreneurial skills and behaviours include curiosity to explore new ways of working, agility and the ability to pivot, customer centricity, to see and hear internal and external perspectives, and the creativity to find new solutions whilst viewing challenges as opportunities.

Whether you are running a business or leading teams, now is the time to grasp the opportunities that utilising technology and delegating to your wider team can bring. As a leader, you will likely be incredibly protective of the culture of the organisation or team you lead, the quality of work output, and the results the business achieves.

However, AI, particularly Generative AI tools, can free up a leader's time to concentrate on the bigger picture and foster more collaborative team dynamics. Generative AI platforms like ChatGPT and Copilot, alongside productivity tools like Notion and Otter, dramatically speed up outputs like drafting emails, transcribing conversations, summarising reports, identifying insights, challenging assumptions, researching, rapid horizon scanning, and making recommendations in seconds, rather than minutes, hours, and days. We're inspired by leaders applying these tools in powerful ways:

- A CEO who brought ChatGPT into strategy offsites as a thought partner to challenge assumptions and identify strategic gaps.
- A CFO and their team who systematically use ChatGPT to accelerate their entrepreneurial capabilities.
- An HR Director who launched "AI Fluency Days" to increase confidence across teams and enable organisational agility and adaptability.

The more confidently we use these tools, the more we'll discover new ways to accelerate human progress. Those who embrace AI's developments will leap ahead, but businesses who choose not to explore the potential of AI risk being left far behind.

While technology will undoubtedly reshape the future of business and how we work, in ways we can't even imagine, we'll still need a human eye, instinct, and creativity in our leadership and people mastery. While AI has the incredible potential to free up time for more human-value activities, businesses must not become over-reliant on these tools at the detriment of human leadership.

Ensuring we continue encouraging ourselves and our team members to think creatively and develop skills like empathy and interpersonal communication is instrumental for a thriving workplace in the AI era.

Integrating AI into your business isn't a trade-off; it's a catalyst, whereby human x AI enables transformative change. We only need to look back through our history to see that we've always built tools to accelerate human progress. AI is just another powerful tool that is part of our evolution.

---

If you're exploring how leadership is evolving in your business and are ready to imagine beyond, we'd love to hear from you.

Connect with Claire at claire@imagine-beyond.co.uk.
Discover more insights at www.imagine-beyond.co.uk/resources/

## About Imagine Beyond

Imagine Beyond is a leadership and learning consultancy that helps founder-led and fast-growing businesses unlock the full potential of their organisations. It works at the intersection of human insight and emerging technologies like AI. Founded by Claire Koryczan, Imagine Beyond was built on the belief that creativity, technology, and people are the essential trifecta for navigating change and scaling sustainably. Imagine Beyond partners with leaders to shape culture, build entrepreneurial capability, and design future-fit strategies that combine progress and possibility.

## About Claire

Claire Koryczan is a renowned consultant, speaker, and strategist, dedicated to empowering leaders to achieve transformative growth and innovation. As the Founder of Imagine Beyond, Claire draws on over 25 years of experience across tech, creative industries, and HR to help leaders master the art of people engagement, creativity, and organisational success. Having worked with FTSE 100, Fortune 500 companies, startups, and SMEs, Claire has guided nearly 10,000 individuals at Imagine Beyond, sharing insights on entrepreneurial leadership and the opportunities presented by AI.

Claire has earned prestigious recognition for her leadership and impact, including being named a Top Team Leadership Voice by LinkedIn, shortlisted for Best Business Coach at the Coach Awards, and nominated for Entrepreneur of the Year by the Soho Works Future 50 Awards in the past year alone. Previously, she was celebrated as one of The Dots' Top 100 Rising Stars, a Female Trailblazer Nominee, and featured among Grant Thornton's Faces of a Vibrant Economy, further cementing her reputation as an inspiring and innovative leader.

# LET'S IMAGINE BEYOND TOGETHER

www.imagine-beyond.co.uk

claire@imagine-beyond.co.uk

IMAGINE BEYOND