

Purpose through Human Capability: AI with Accountability

Richard Skellett and Dave Ulrich, November 2026

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The overall question of this series of four posts is easy to state: *"How does AI create lasting value for individuals, organizations, communities, and society?"* Innumerable books, studies, reports, position papers, webinars, podcasts, and conferences offer insights and tools for progress. The basic answer is simple, but not easy to implement. AI in the Loop with the Human works best, within a convergent intelligence architecture built on amplification, putting people first and redesigning the workforce and the work. We know our views will not capture all the nuances, but in four posts, we hope to distill ideas that will help business and HR leaders make progress.

Post 1 started with original intelligence and showed that over time, technology and people have continually collaborated through an industrial, a digital, and now an AI age around six common principles. We use the term convergent intelligence to capture the AI age of connecting people and AI. Post 2 discussed how to ensure convergence by starting with a clear purpose that requires human judgement and wisdom, and using AI innovations to amplify and accomplish the purpose, often requiring both a human (person) and digital (twin) workforce.

In this post (3), we translate convergent intelligence into actionable insights that guide business and HR decisions. We propose three steps to advance convergent intelligence into an architecture of lasting value: create unity of purpose, amplify human capability, and establish clarity of accountability.

Post 4 shares broader implications and evolving questions for individuals, organizations, communities, and society.

Turning ideas into impact is much easier said than done. Volumes have been written over decades about making and sustaining change. Today, the AI agenda has permeated all aspects of work, particularly the combination of people and technology. We have traced the historical evolution of original intelligence to what we call convergent intelligence (a combination of human and AI), which is a distillation of many related concepts (see ***Figure 1*** and previous posts).

Building on this material, we propose three steps to make convergent intelligence happen effectively: **1. create unity of purpose, 2. amplify human capability, and 3. establish clarity of accountability.**

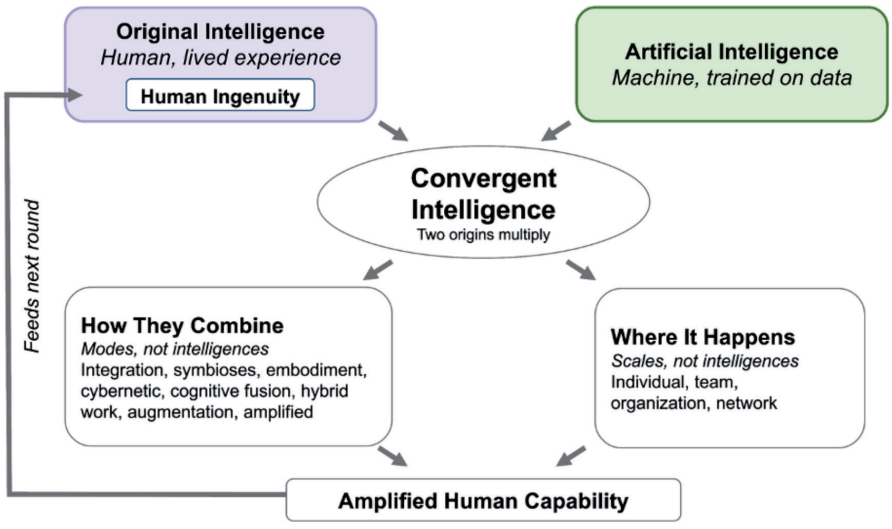


Figure 1: Convergent Intelligence – Synthesis of Terms



A. Create Unity of Purpose

Measuring activities more than results is easy and common. In HR, activity measures might include percent of employees who receive 40 hours of training a year, annual performance reviews, or engagement surveys. Likewise in AI, activity measures pervade: number of AI users, prompts, licenses purchased, or automated tasks. Activities matter, but convergence starts with unity of purpose around value created.

Drawing on Dave's work in HR value creation, convergent intelligence has four outcomes (***Figure 2***). Most of the current work on convergence starts with efficiency by removing or automating tasks to increase capacity and productivity and decrease costs. Companies then want to ensure that they are using the latest and most current tools for both technology and people. This convergent work should help deliver business financial and strategic results. We agree with all three of these organization purposes, but we also propose the next agenda, which is to deliver value to customer, investor, and community stakeholders. If an organization does not succeed in the marketplace, they no longer have a workplace; so the emerging purpose of convergence is marketplace success (***Figure 2***). Moving to stakeholder value means that all business leaders engaged on convergence build a line of sight to how their work will deliver market value.

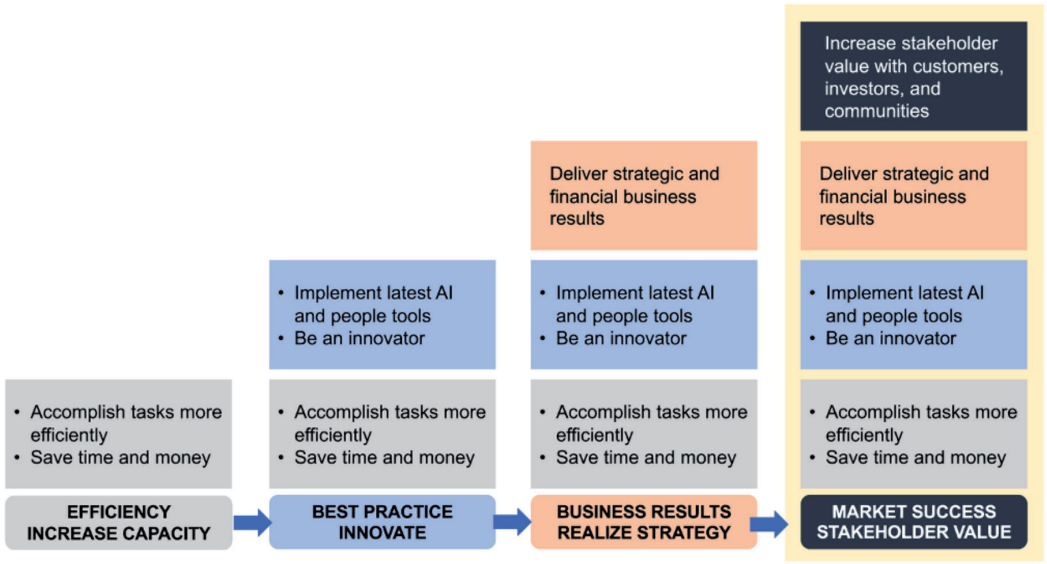


Figure 2: Purpose (Outcomes, Value Created) from Convergent Intelligence

B. Amplify Human Capability

Almost all of the work on the convergence of technology and people focuses on how AI augments and amplifies work done by the individual employees, or human capital. Our research (and others') has shown that the organization system delivers more stakeholder value than focusing on the individual employee:

organization capability > individual competence; system > skill; culture > event; workplace > workforce.

Dave has created a taxonomy that broadens human capital to human capability including talent (human capital) + organization + leadership + HR function. Each element of this taxonomy may be amplified through technology (see ***Figure 3***).



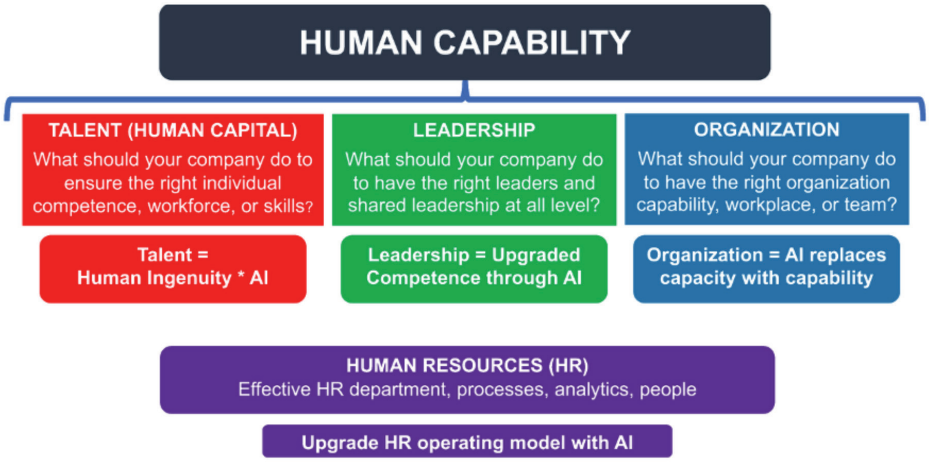


Figure 3: Amplification of Four Elements of Human Capability by AI

B1. Talent = Human Ingenuity * AI

An emerging consensus is that convergent intelligence is human led and AI amplified. Humans provide critical thinking (that we have called human ingenuity, a subset of the broader concept of human capability) with four elements (***Figure 4***).

Human Ingenuity Concept (VIEW)	**Unique Contribution** A human complements AI by being able to:	**Unique Human Skills** A human has the skills to:
Vision	Anticipate, create, and shape a future purpose that does not currently exist.	➢ Identify key stakeholders and determine their unmet needs. ➢ Notice trends, signals, and discontinuities in business context. ➢ Envision and articulate the opportunities of what can be.
Innovation	Generate and generalize new ideas and actions that have impact.	➢ Be curious to discover new ideas. ➢ Experiment with options; seek possibilities. ➢ Take initiative and exercise choice.
Emotion	Communicate with empathy and personal affection within relationships.	➢ Show care and compassion for others. ➢ Shape meaning, trust, and intent. ➢ Manage tensions within and repair relationships.
Wisdom	Think and act with good judgment and values in making decisions even in uncertain times.	➢ Follow and be responsible for a disciplined decision protocol. ➢ Exercise moral agency to ensure values and ethics as part of decision processes. ➢ Rely on insights (ideas, evidence, solutions) to accomplish work.

Figure 4: Four Dimensions of Human Ingenuity

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B2. Leadership: AI Ensures Upgraded Competencies

Our (and others') research has captured the necessary competencies leaders must demonstrate to be effective in five timeless domains called The Leadership Code. Leaders can use AI to improve in each of the five domains for themselves and for those they lead (***Figure 5***).

Leadership Code Domain	Definition An effective leader:	AI Contribution Domain Competence AI will help the leader:
Strategist	Articulates a vision of the future that differentiates the organization, inspires hope, and prioritizes opportunity.	➢ Determine market trends that the organization could address. ➢ Define a unique position in the market with products and services. ➢ Prioritize investments to deliver value.
Executor	Delivers on strategic priorities by making change happen, ensuring accountability, and improving decision making.	➢ Improve decisions with better analytics and processes. ➢ Move with agility to transform work. ➢ Ensure an accountability architecture for progress.
Talent Manager	Builds a competent, committed, and contributing workforce with a high employee value proposition.	➢ Personalize the employee experience. ➢ Track and improve employee performance and sentiment. ➢ Build positive relationships among employees.
Human Capital Developer	Creates a positive work environment that empowers employees to meet their goals.	➢ Define and create a culture that links firm brand and values. ➢ Track and increase belonging. ➢ Tailor careers to match personal and organizational goals.
Personal Proficiency	Takes care of oneself physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually.	➢ Monitor personal well-being. ➢ Become trusted and authentic. ➢ Demonstrate resilience and growth.

Figure 5: Leadership Code Domain and AI Contribution

B3. Organization: AI Replaces Capacity with Capability

AI creates capacity by redefining and improving work tasks that results in greater productivity (lower costs, higher efficiency), less friction (time on administrative tasks), and improved quality (consistency, precision). When the excess capacity created by AI use can be turned into organization capabilities that deliver value to stakeholders, organizations prosper. Capabilities represent what the organization is known for and good at doing (e.g., agility [speed, transformation, change], culture [identity, norms, expectations], customer centricity, collaboration, simplicity, or accountability). These capabilities help deliver customer share, investor intangibles, and community reputation. Business and HR leaders can do capability audits to determine where to invest to have the greatest impact from AI-generated capacity.

Digital AI provides even greater capacity with a digital twin that allows 24-hour service seven days a week. The digital twin can accomplish many work tasks both efficiently and effectively. As Richard pointed out in our previous post, the continual update of the twin ensures that it represents accurate information.



B4. Human Resources: AI Elevates the HR Operating Model

The HR function will clearly pivot its operating model with AI. ***Figure 6*** shows how AI will evolve and elevate four fundamental elements of the HR operating model, with differing impact for each of the four elements.

HR Elements (possible names)	Legacy Activities	Our view with AI and Stakeholder Value
Corporate • HR leadership • HR executive team	✓ Create a consistent firm-wide culture face and identity ✓ Shape the programs that implement the CEO's agenda ✓ Engage with the board on succession and human capability ✓ Arbitrate disputes between centers of expertise / embedded HR ✓ Take primary responsibility for corporate-level employees ✓ Ensure HR professional development	**50% HI and 50% AI** + Prioritize firm human capability investments based on stakeholder value + Engage targeted (key) customer accounts to learn wants and needs + Report human capability results to investment community + Build community citizenship through policies and philanthropy
Shared Service • People services • Service delivery • Business service • People/HR operations	✓ Standardize common HR administrative processes ✓ Gain economy of scale by shared services ✓ Use technology to do foundational HR / employee self service ✓ Give employees access to HR services through portals (24*7) ✓ Track information on employee issues	**10–20% HI and 80–90% AI** + Replace service centers with AI to drive HR process efficiency; use bots + Use genAI to communicate policies, personalize information to each employee need, track use of HR services to benchmark against industry standard, measure their use and impact on stakeholder value within firm
Centers of Expertise (Specialists) • Capability centers • Communities of practice • Analytics expert • Process excellence • Functional experts	✓ Create service menus aligned with the capabilities and strategy ✓ Diagnose needs and recommend services ✓ Collaborate with embedded HR professionals in selecting and implementing the right services ✓ Create new menu offerings if the current offering is insufficient ✓ Shepherd the learning community within the organization	**~50% HI and 50% AI** + Use genAI to learn the industry benchmarks for HR practices + Use AI tools (e.g., scanning) to track impact of HR practice on stakeholder value to prioritize and tailor HR investments + Collaborate with thought leaders to create new HR solutions + Share information across businesses to create a learning matrix + Build capability centers that combine functional expertise with AI
Embedded HR (Generalists) • Embedded HR • Strategic advisor, partner, solutions provider • Relationship manager	✓ Engage in business strategy discussion ✓ Represent employee interests and implications of change ✓ Define requirements to reach business goals and identify where problems may exist ✓ Select and implement the HR practices that are most appropriate to the delivery of the business strategy ✓ Measure and track performance to see whether the HR investments made by the business deliver intended value	**~60% HI and 40% AI** + Connect with customers, investors, and communities to know their wants and needs and human capability investments that deliver them + Partner with senior business leaders by being accountable, sharing information, and delivering on human capability priorities + Offer integrated human capability solutions across HR practices areas (likely around organization capabilities) + Access and share information on impact more than activity

Figure 6: AI Impact on Evolution of HR Operating Model

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Amplify Human Capability Summary

Figure 7 expands *Figure 3* to summarize convergence with four elements of human capability and AI.

Overall Concept	Human Capability An integrated umbrella term with four sub elements			
Elements of Human Capability	**Talent** (Related to people and individuals; human capital)	**Organization** (Related to the organization)	**Leadership** (Related to leaders at all levels)	**HR Function** (Related to the operation of an HR department)
Terms and Dimensions	• Individual competence • Workforce • Skills • Player • People • Behavior	• Organization capability • Workplace • System • Team • Processes • Culture	• Competencies of individual leaders at all levels • Often timeless principles and timely practices • The overall leadership capability	How the HR department works to deliver more value: vision, operating model, analytics, skills, etc.
AI Impact	Talent = HI * AI • Vision of the future • Innovation in present • Emotion with relationships • Wisdom in decisions	AI for capacity through task management; organization for capability that delivers stakeholder value	AI multiplies, amplifies and advances competencies in five timeless domains	AI adds value to operating model: • Service center (90/10 AI/HI) • Centers of capability (50/50 AI/HI) • Embedded HR (40/60 AI/HI)

Figure 7: Summary of Convergence of Human Capability and AI

C. Establish Clarity of Accountability

Accountability defines who is answerable for convergent intelligence by clarifying ownership and managing governance. In some cases, a single accountable individual (or function [e.g., CTO or CHRO]) can be identified. More often, to deliver the stakeholder value through human capability, an accountability architecture can be created with four decisions (*Figure 8*).



Figure 8: Four Decisions of Accountability Architecture



With the accountability architecture in place, individuals (and roles) and their specific responsibilities (tasks) and authority (decision rights) can be identified (***Figure 9***).

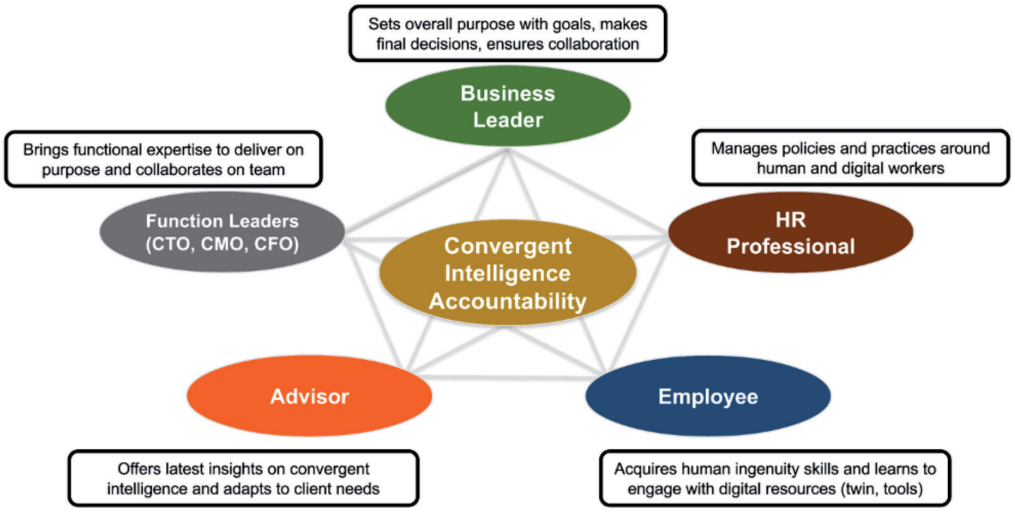


Figure 9: Partners for Convergent Accountability

As these partners work both independently and together, they share responsibility, authority, influence, and power to deliver stakeholder HR.

Not Yet a Conclusion

No question that a convergence of human capability and AI is emerging (***Figure 1***). This convergence starts with clarity of purpose or value created with an evolving focus on stakeholder value (***Figure 2***). Stakeholder value broadens human capital to human capability (***Figure 3*** and ***Figure 7***) with specific convergence activity in talent (***Figure 4***), organization, leadership (***Figure 5***), and HR (***Figure 6***). Convergent stakeholder value through human capability requires an accountability architecture (***Figure 8***) with clear responsibility and authority (***Figure 9***).

Whew! We said the original question, "How does AI create lasting value for individuals, organizations, communities, and society?" was easy to state and answer (AI in the Loop with Human) but not easy to do. In this post, we lay out specific and simple ideas with a wide range of actions for making convergent intelligence happen effectively. In the next post, we share broader implications and next steps.

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