HOW TO STAY HUMAN IN THE AGE OF AI

Accelerate Chicago 2026
Closing Keynote

DR. SERENA H. HUANG

THE JOURNEY

TAIWAN

A long journey home. Racing against time to see my grandmother in the ICU, wondering what was waiting for me.

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STRESS. NOISE. CHAOS.

CALM.

TWO NURSES



Present. Focused.

Not stretched thin. Not racing between hospital rooms.

THE DIGITAL KIOSK

At the hospital entrance.



Quietly. Efficiently.

WHAT DOES TECHNOLOGY FREE HUMANS TO DO?

CHICAGO. MY OFFICE.

One prompt_



Multi-sprint project.

One prompt. Seconds.

A working app.
Five prompts.



THE REACTION

SIT-BACK-IN-YOUR-CHAIR AWE.

30s

THIRTY SECONDS LATER...

People I hired. Roles I built. Careers I sponsored.



DESIGNER

Wireframes & Interface



DEVELOPER

Front-end



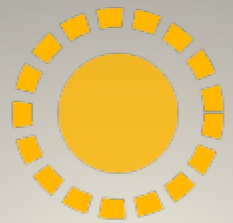
QA TESTER

Unit & Functional Testing

RIGHT NOW.

Two Different Rooms

If AI can do more of the information work, what becomes more valuable for being human?



...they choose to strengthen the human skills that machines do not have.



AI IS GETTING VERY GOOD AT HANDLING INFORMATION



HUMANS ARE STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR JUDGMENT, STORYTELLING, AND ADAPTABILITY.

[Show of Hands]

<5%

22%

of jobs disrupted by 2030

(Source: 2025 World Economic Forum)

170M

CREATED

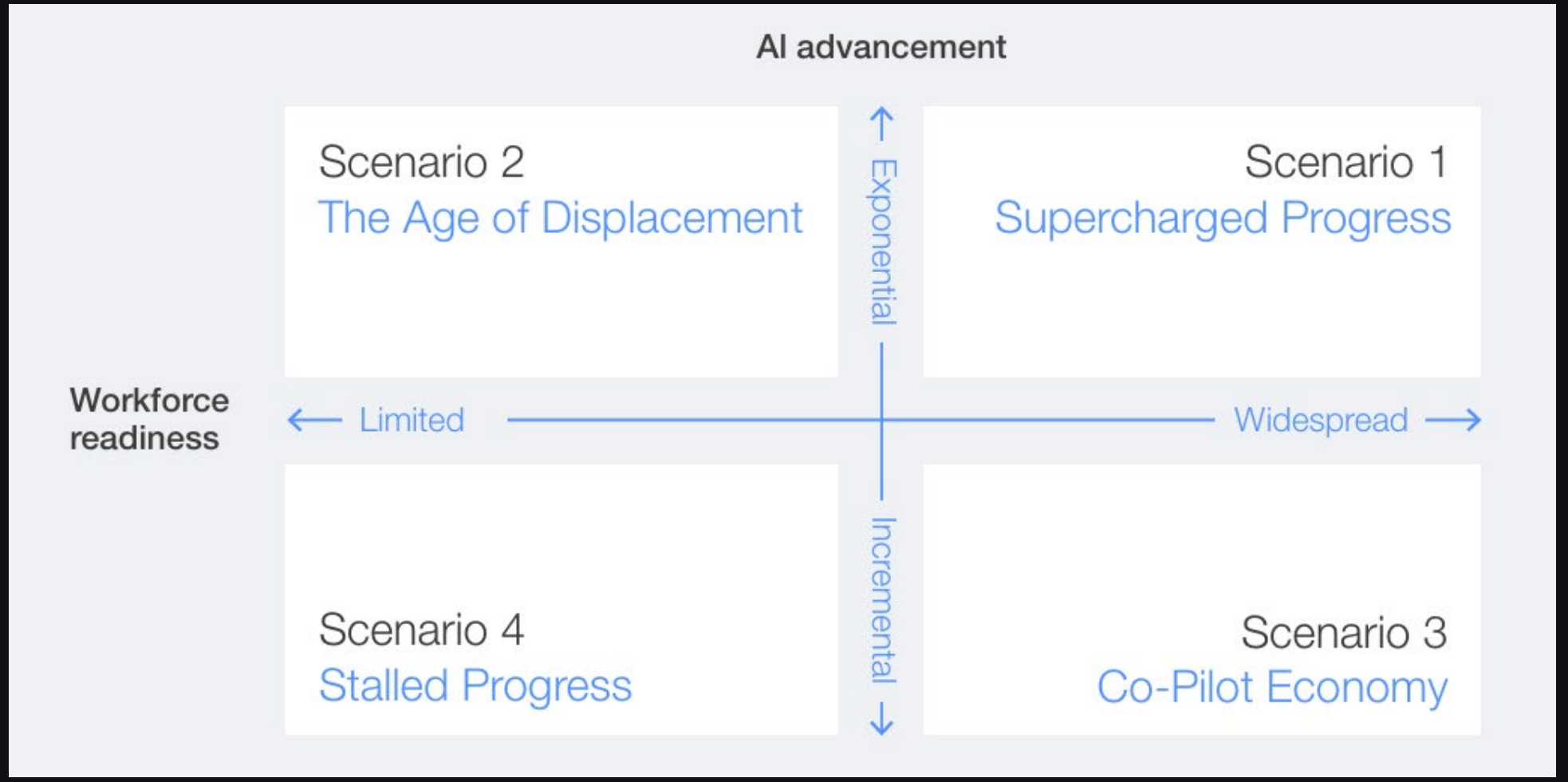
92M

ELIMNATED

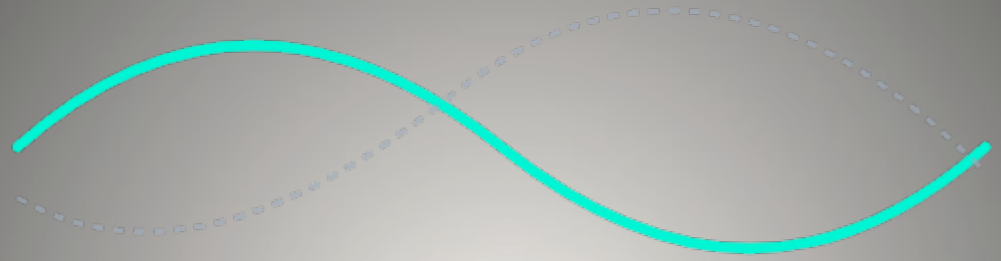
+78M

NET INCREASE

(Source: 2025 World Economic Forum)



(Source: 2026 World Economic Forum)



The Definition of Valuable Work Is Shifting.

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YOUR CAREER IS NOT ON

Your manager’s roadmap.

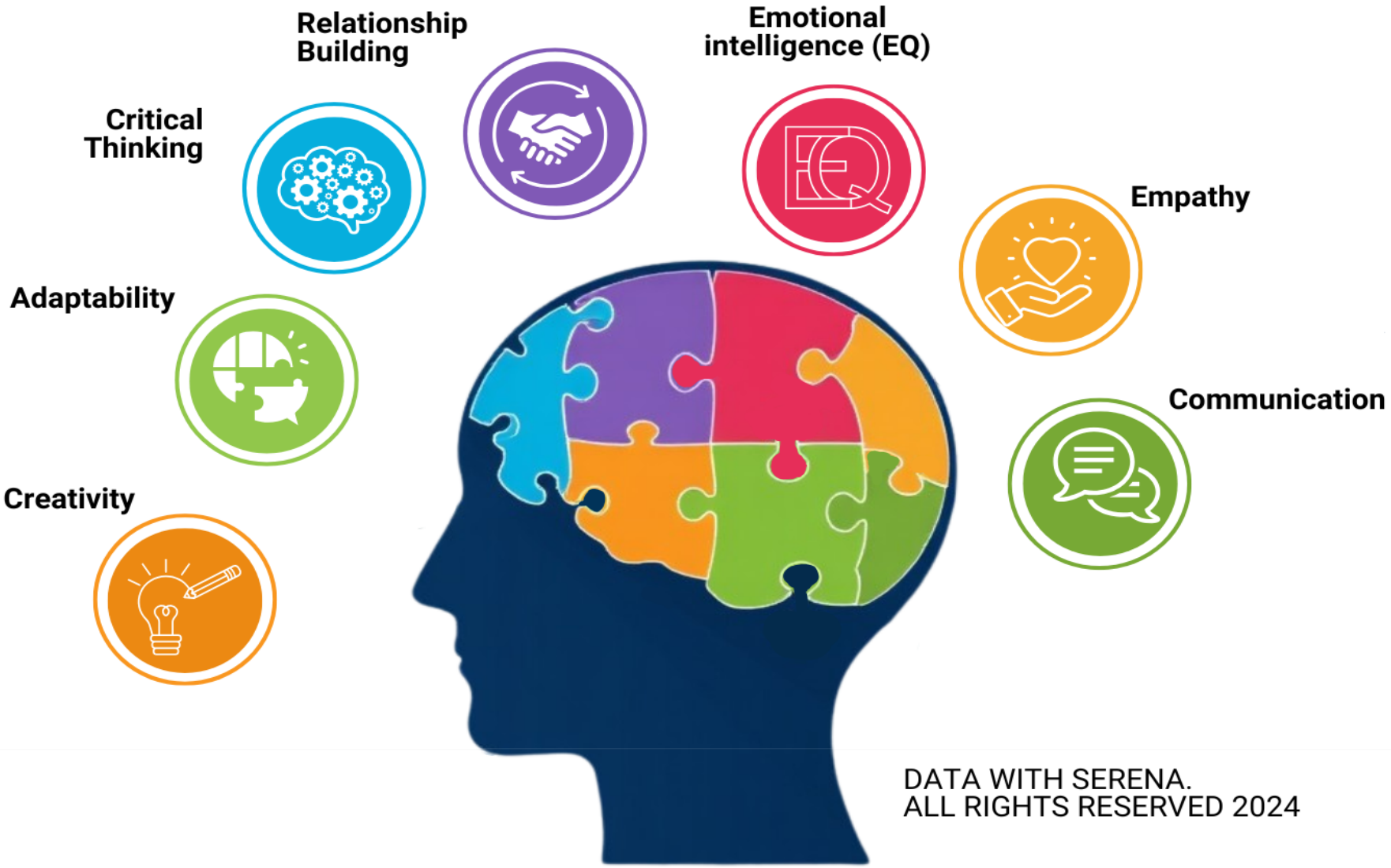
YOUR CAREER IS NOT ON

Your manager’s roadmap.

THEIR CAREER IS NOT ON

Their manager’s roadmap.

7 HUMAN SKILLS



DATA WITH SERENA.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED 2024

THREE HUMAN SKILLS



CRITICAL THINKING



COMMUNICATION



ADAPTABILITY

AS AI GETS BETTER...



The bar for what counts as your contribution shifts upward

OLD QUESTION

Can you produce something?

NEW QUESTION

Can you tell whether the output is right, for this context, for this person?

AI RECRUITING TOOL



"Something didn't feel right."



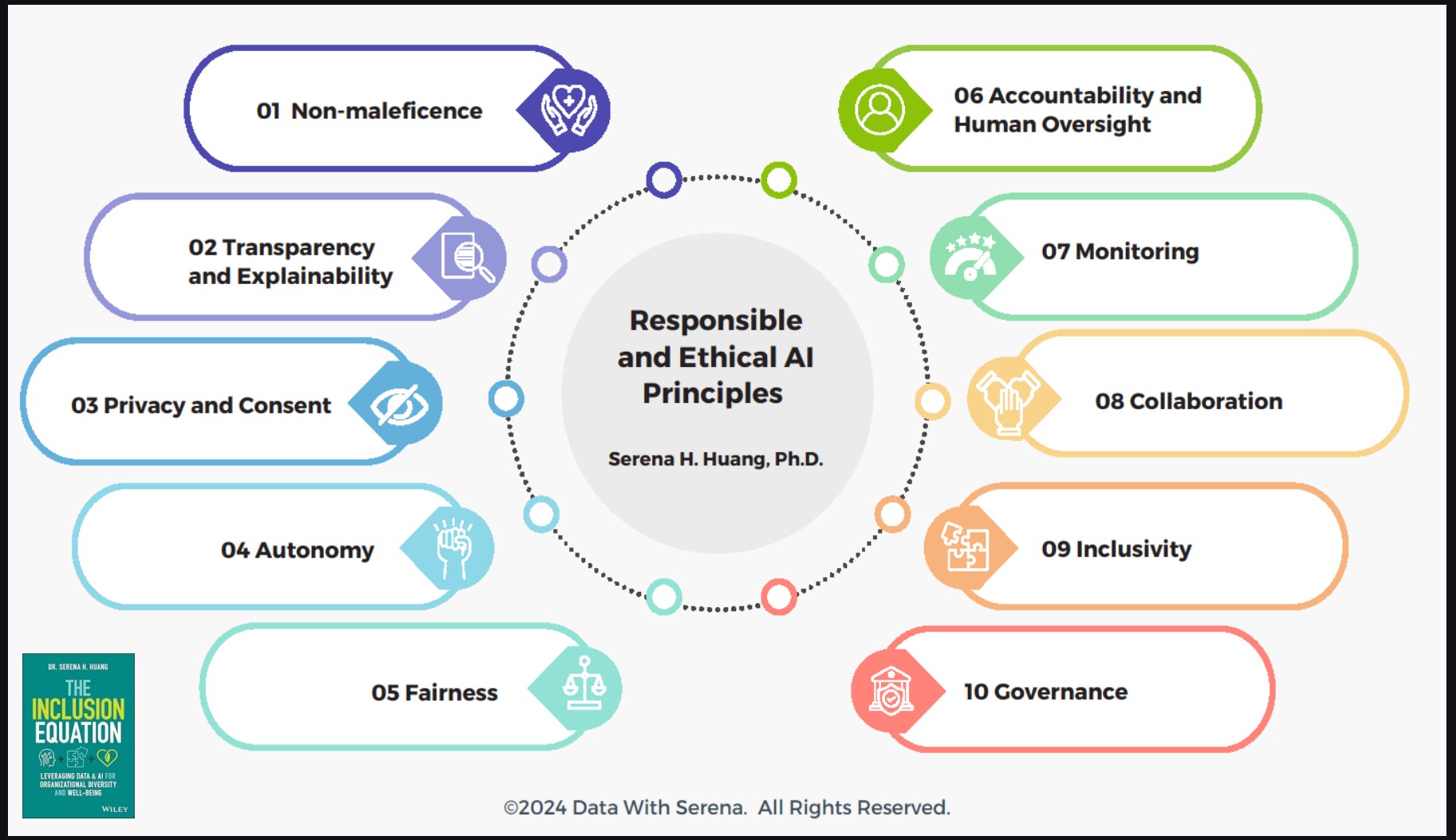
REAL JOBS.
REAL RESUMES.



48 Hours

ALGORITHMIC BIAS

THE FRAMEWORK



DO NO HARM.

THE EMAIL THAT ALMOST SENT ITSELF



A Different Risk.

Humans make assumptions too.

People are biased too.

USING AI AS A TOOL



OUTSOURCING THINKING COMPLETELY

AI GENERATES OUTPUT THAT LOOKS RIGHT



And because it looks right, it’s very easy to accept.

When your default isn’t “let me think about it”, you start outsourcing more than the task. Over time, your critical thinking weakens.

Communication

STORYTELLING

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THE EXECUTIVE ROOM

Data-Informed Recommendations

A room of executives who ignored my recommendations, and I learned a lesson.

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TELL THEM A STORY.



DATA

You are asking people follow your logic



STORY

You are dropping them into an experience

THREE STRATEGIC STORY FORMS

01 **THE USER STORY**

02 **THE FUTURE STORY**

03 **THE ANALOGY STORY**

01 THE USER STORY



Put the person in the room

Anchor your recommendations inside the physical context of real-world end users.

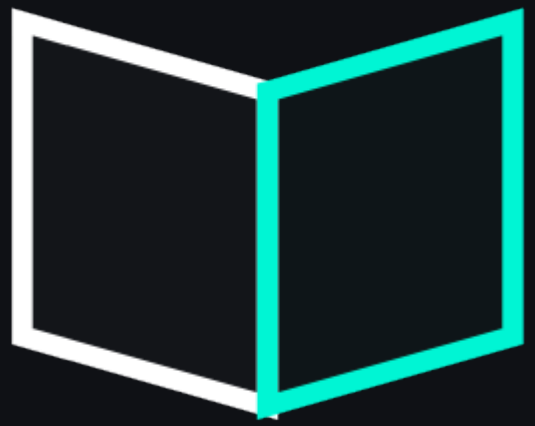
02 THE FUTURE STORY



Paint them a picture

6 months from now, traffic will be 10x, and if we don’t do anything….

03 THE ANALOGY STORY



What will resonate

Find a parallel that your stakeholders can understand and appreciate

Adaptability

What worked for you last year...

May not work this year

THE SILENT BLOCK

AN UNLEARNING PROBLEM.

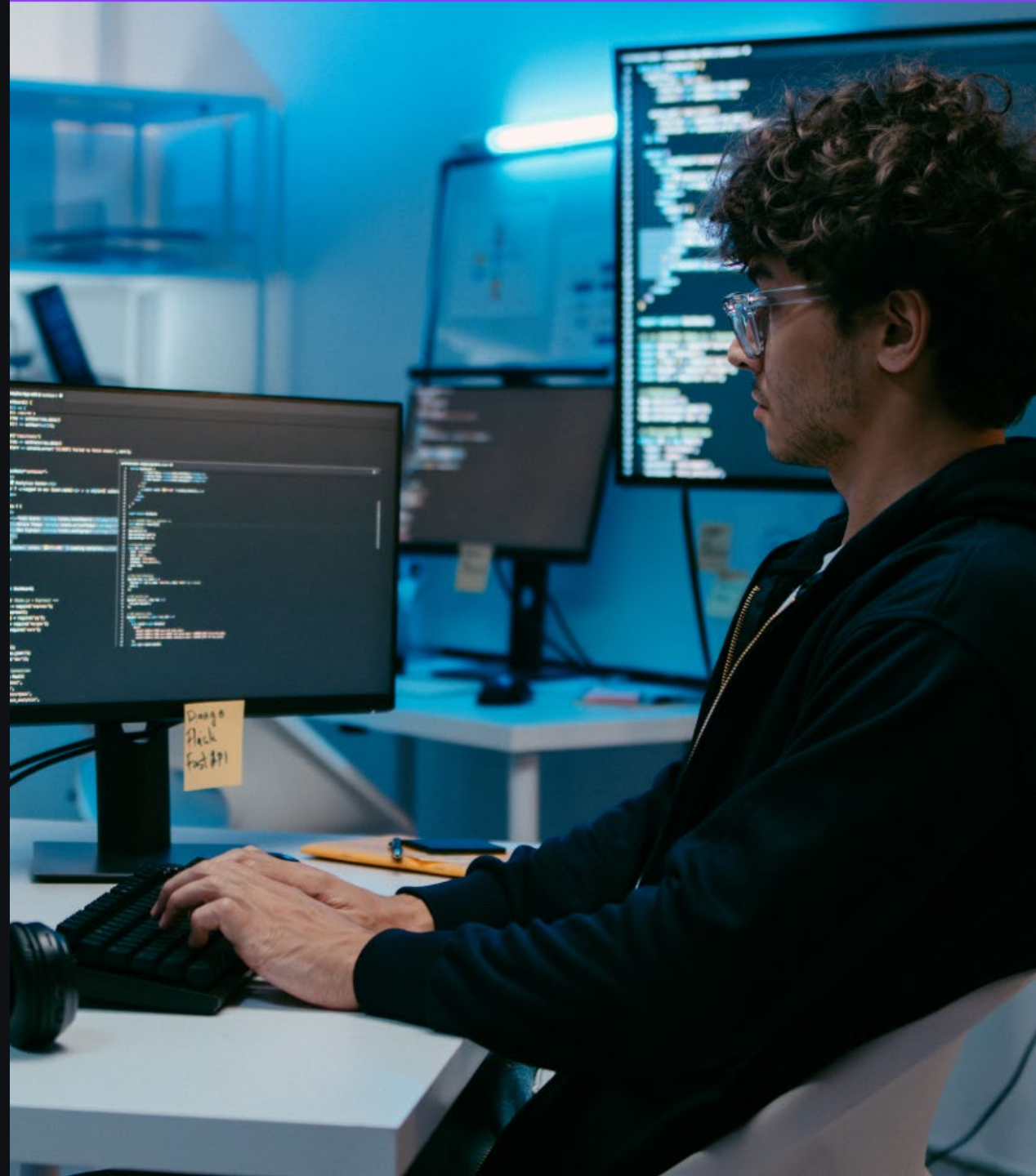
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FOR THE MANAGERS IN THE ROOM

ENGINEERING LEADERS WHO HANDLED THIS WELL

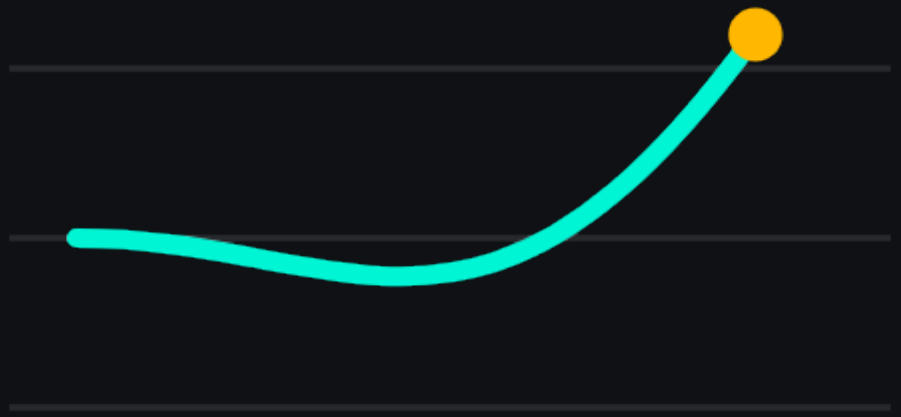
They started by figuring it out themselves. They spent time with AI tools. They made mistakes. They shared what they found. That honesty created permission for their teams to struggle out loud and have real learning.

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REWARD THE HONEST QUESTION OVER THE CONFIDENT ANSWER.

STOP WAITING FOR THE ORGANIZATION TO FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOU

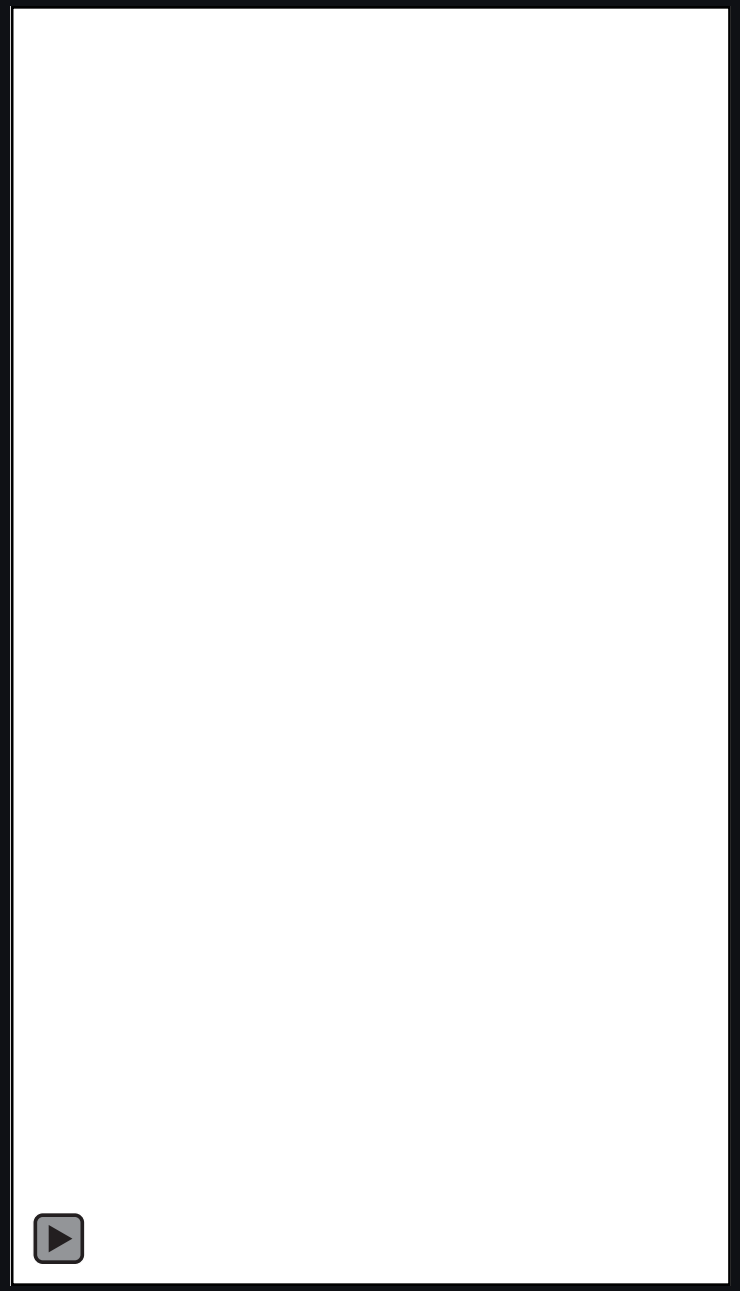


Write your own roadmap

Stop waiting for top-down organizational clarity. Proactively define your skill expansion, testing boundaries, and start moving today.

I built my own replacement.

She looks like me.
Sounds like me.



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What conferences want isn’t just information

The Harder Question is

Whether we're solving the right problem in the first place.

Can AI deliver the talk?



What do people actually need?

AI Built With Local Community

A GRANDMA IN TAIWAN

An elderly woman, needing clear instructions for critical medication at the ER. Speaking only her tribal native tongue, Taroko, relies on her grandson for translation.

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The Chief Nursing Officer asked

“What does our patient need in that moment?”

SOLUTION

AI ASSISTANT

The hospital trained a model to deliver medical advice and discharge instructions through a friendly avatar representation speaking with cultural respect.



AI COMPANION

PARO

The therapeutic robotic seal. Providing emotional support to the elderly in nursing homes and hospitals in Japan.



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What About...

AI Companions for Children

WOULD IT BE RESPONSIBLE?

NO.

THE ULTIMATE MANDATE

Choose human development over profit.

One Image



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A question that wouldn't go away.

Are you going to follow it?