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4 Ways To Supercharge Your Team Using AI And Prevent “Cognitive Offloading” Forbes, 2026

Context

As AI adoption accelerates, organisations face a growing risk of "cognitive offloading," where employees outsource routine and complex thinking alike to AI tools. Research suggests this can erode critical thinking and create AI slop (note of the author, also see other digests). A CEMS report¹ further warns that employees AI-overreliance can have emotional consequences like detachment, a diminished sense of purpose and lower confidence. The article outlines four strategies to mitigate such offloading. The overall goals are strengthening independent reasoning, redesigning incentives and workflows around human judgement as well as strategically pairing AI and human strengths.

Key Insights

▶ **The FORGOOD mapping reflects the authors' interpretation and is not part of the original source.*

Strategy	FORGOOD	What it means
Design for augmentation, not automation	F - Fairness (protect human value)	Preserve space for human aspects of work like creativity, curiosity, ethical reasoning and self-awareness. Help people decide which tasks stay human, which are AI-co-created, and which are automated. Revisit these boundaries as tools and roles evolve.
Enforce "think first, prompt second" as norm	R - Respect (preserve autonomy)	Employees are expected to generate and structure their own ideas before turning to AI. AI becomes an enhancer of reasoning and sparring partner, not an employee substitute.
Reward independent thinking, not just efficiency	G - Goals (realign incentives)	Performance KPIs and incentives should value independent questioning, interpretation and judgement, beyond AI-assisted speed.
Capitalise on the four different "personas" of AI	D - Delegation (human vs AI personas)	4 roles of AI in a team: 1. "digital doer" (repetitive tasks) 2. "number ninja" (data processing) 3. "silicon psychic" (future scenarios) 4. "cyber soulmate" (empathy for digital interactions). Align these with human personalities and use cases to lower risk.

Implications

- Where in your workflows do employees default to AI without structuring their own thinking first?
- How do your performance incentives distinguish between speed of output and reasoning-quality?
- How actively does your team differentiate between AI's distinct “personas” when assigning tasks?
- Does your team have formalised policies and guidelines yet for deciding which tasks stay human, get AI-co-created, or are fully automated? Are they sufficient? Are there still systemic blind spots?

Percy, S. (2026, January 20). 4 ways to supercharge your team using AI and prevent cognitive offloading. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sallypercy/2026/01/20/4-ways-to-supercharge-your-team-using-ai-and-prevent-cognitive-offloading/>;

¹ CEMS. (2026). Think First, Prompt Second: CEMS explores what will define next-level leadership in the AI era. <https://www.cems.org/news-events/news/think-first-prompt-second-cems-explores-what-will-define-next-level-leadership-ai>