



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE | Meeting Recap

How AI Is Driving Smaller Learning Teams, Faster Planning, and Better Managers

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Human resources is in the midst of a seismic transformation. Artificial intelligence isn't just knocking at HR's door—it's already inside, fundamentally reshaping how teams operate, what skills matter, and even how many people organizations need.

On Sept. 16, M1 CHROs gathered in New York at a meeting hosted by Daniela Seabrook of The Adecco Group and Nathalie Scardino of Salesforce to discuss these issues and more. Attendees heard about new research from Adecco and discussed a variety of challenges they face, from new pay transparency regulations in Europe to Gen Z's demands for better technology. But the focus was largely on the impact of artificial intelligence on their teams, their companies, and the future of the HR function at large.

Below are a few takeaways from the day's discussions. As always, let us know if we can help connect you.

Learning and development could get a weekend makeover.

During the day's discussions, CHROs expressed astonishment at the AI tools that are being used to create learning and development coursework. One pointed to Synthesia, the AI-generated video and avatar tool, which the CHRO's company used to create a series of micro-learning videos for coursework that's launching this fall. "What would have taken at least a month and \$50,000 two years ago was done over a weekend with our team using the vendor," the CHRO said. "It's amazing. ... If you're an instructional designer right now, you should be looking at plumbing school."

While that CHRO said the comment was made somewhat in jest, it's clear these jobs face big disruptions as AI does more. "How do we reimagine these jobs?" one CHRO asked. As instructional designers shift from being content creators to serving more as learning architects, strategists, and data interpreters, they'll need to develop skills like the ability to critically evaluate AI outputs, think more strategically, and exercise greater judgment.

AI will demand planning in shorter increments.

Companies may still make three- or five-year plans, but one CHRO said AI's exponential speed is already changing her approach. "I've stopped saying 'in the future,'" the CHRO said. "I think

AT A GLANCE:

- Instructional designers' jobs are at risk as AI use grows. These learning and development jobs will need to shift from being content creators to learning architects and data interpreters.
- CHROs are already seeing a convergence of skills across compensation, HR business partner roles, and talent acquisition.
- CHROs are wrestling with improving managerial effectiveness as AI assumes more routine work. "I think in everything we do [with AI], the measure will be how effective our managers are," one CHRO said.

in six month increments now, and I probably should be even more agile, thinking about three-month increments, because that's how fast technology is enabling change."

That speed is prompting organizations to move faster, upskill workers, and disrupt planning—but also adds complexity and uncertainty, especially around role redesign. Said one CHRO: "The future of work is now. We have to be thinking completely different. ... We don't even know in three, four, or five years what kind of roles are going to be there."

“ The question is not actually how many people will we need. The question is what do we think that team should do in order to have the biggest impact.”

- a CHRO participant in a recent M1 CHRO meeting

Another noted the hurdles they've faced when redesigning roles, even at senior levels in progressive, tech-forward companies. "One of the things that has been difficult is getting more senior-level folks to buy in on the sprints and not be obstacles or ask for guardrails. ... We set up three different kinds of sprints and three different kinds of transformations for roles. But even the smallest one got a lot of anxiety and pushback."

AI is already dramatically resizing HR teams...

A major part of the discussion focused on how AI is reshaping HR team structure, roles, and size. In some companies, it's already having significant impact: One CHRO shared that her team had shrunk by about 40%, and she sees another 25% reduction over the next five years due to automation, AI, and digital agents. "The premium will be on the business partners. I can expect to invest more, dollars-wise, on some different capabilities in different areas. I don't think I'll be spending less."

One CHRO suggested she could see a 20% to 30% reduction in size, while others said the magnitude will depend on how efficient the organization already is and how much efficiency remains to be gained. Still others said too many questions remain about required size, depending on how the function transforms as more work shifts to digital agents. "The question is not actually how many people will we need," one CHRO said. "The question is what do we think that team should do in order to have the biggest impact."

...but how AI reshapes HR teams may leave a bigger mark.

As one CHRO put it, "I don't know if headcount's going to drop significantly. But I think the type of work that people do is going to change. It's going to be more important to be consultative, more important to be empathetic, more important to have that emotional connection."

CHROs said they already see a convergence of skills when hiring, as HR business partner, compensation, and talent acquisition roles begin to merge. "I see all those jobs starting to collapse," one said. "Some of them will collapse faster than others. When you start to hire people who have a variety of those skill sets, you can bring all of that to the business in a much more effective way." She believes centers of excellence will likely be a lot smaller and the outputs will be different, but "your business partners will have to have much more of a repertoire of skill sets. Agents should take away the easy work and then you'll have more of an R&D space."

Some said that's already changing, especially to meet the expectations of business leaders. Traditional HR business partners have often ended up as the go-betweens to the centers of excellence and business leaders, and executives "see right through that," one CHRO said, noting the demand for business acumen skills will rise among HR business partners, too. "They want one stop. Full service expertise. If it goes that way, it will add tremendous value."

AI can only make the most impact if managers are more effective, too.

CHROs wrestled with improving managerial effectiveness as AI assumes more routine work. "I think in everything we do [with AI], the measure will be how effective our managers are," one CHRO said. For managers, the role will be "to be empathetic, to be caring, to be a strategic advisor and less operational dealing with spreadsheets and pivot tables and things that AI can do in 30 seconds."

One CHRO said he was getting pressure from his CEO to improve managers' efficiency and effectiveness, but he's been trying to get managers to own that development in others, rather than expecting HR to do it all. The irony? AI coaches such as Valence's Nadia may be the answer, offering much more coaching, role-playing, and digital support for improving managerial effectiveness.

Where will CHROs really spend their time as all these changes unfold? One CHRO captured it well: performance optimization—driving the highest level of performance possible—and building experience curation. "We are going to create the experiences of what it's like to use all of these things we've been talking about, and the ones who do it better will have the advantage."