



Shape the future
with confidence

People Leaders Forum

May 7-8, 2025



The better the question. The better the answer.
The better the world works.

People Leaders Forum

May 8, 2025

Welcome

Edward Rajaratnam

Partner, Payroll and Employment Tax,
EY Canada



Agenda

01

Canadian economic outlook

Doug Porter

02

Geopolitics x economic impacts x talent

Robert Asselin | Batia Stein

03

People and organizational responses to uncertain market and business conditions

Richard Skippon

04

AI in Action: HR tech innovations shaping the future of human capital management

Paul Tucker

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Masterclass sessions

- Geopolitics and workforce strategy
- Total rewards: Keeping pace with changing times
- Harnessing the transformative power of AI in your organization

06

C-suite insights: Navigating leadership, innovation and transformation

Chris Gordon | Jad Shimaly | Lisa Melchior

People Leaders Forum

May 8, 2025

Canadian economic outlook

SPEAKER

Doug Porter

Chief Economist & Managing Director,
BMO Financial Group



Geopolitics x economic impacts x talent

SPEAKERS

Robert Asselin

Senior Vice President, Policy,
Business Council of Canada

Batia Stein

Partner, Immigration,
EY Canada



People and organizational responses to uncertain market and business conditions

SPEAKER

Richard Skippon

Partner, Workforce Advisory,
EY Canada



Where is the Crystal Ball?

"In a world of uncertainty, the only certainty is that there is no certainty"

Economic Volatility

The CBOE Volatility Index is experiencing its third highest score in the last 20 years just behind 2008 (Financial Tsunami) and 2020 (COVID)

Technology Disruption

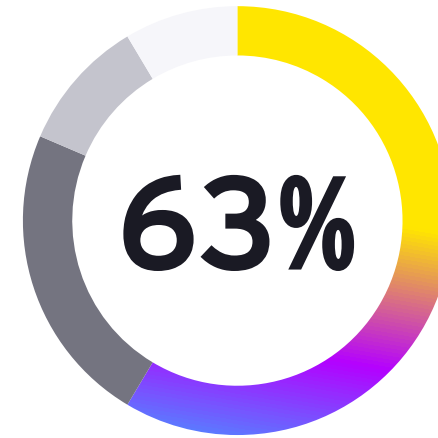
There is an increasing trend in patent applications growth rate in Canada since 2009 reaching double digits in recent years

Geopolitical Tensions

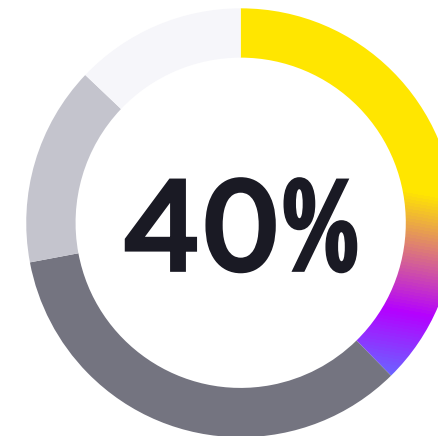
Recent tariffs are the most sweeping in the U.S. since before World War I

Consumer Confidence

At 45.5 points in March 2025, consumer confidence in Canada is 12% lower than the average for the past 15 years of 51.76 points



Leaders see uncertain economic growth as a top threat



Leaders feel prepared to confront this uncertainty

Key to Win - Resilience

“ It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change

Business Continuity: Companies with high resilience are 60% more likely to survive economic downturns

Financial Performance: Resilient companies outperform their peers by 30% in terms of financial performance during periods of uncertainty

Innovation & Growth: Resilient organizations are 40% more likely to achieve innovation during uncertain times, leading to new products and services that drive growth

Crisis Management: Organization with strong resilience strategies are 70% more effective in managing crisis and minimizing their impact on operations

Organization Resilience

A company's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disruptions

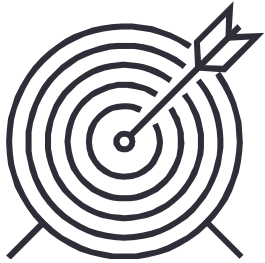
People Resilience

Ability of individuals to cope with stress, adapt to challenge and achieve sustainable high performance

HR Resilience

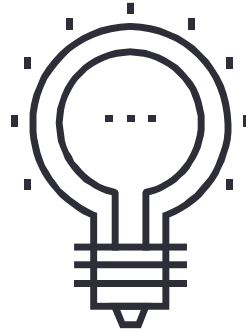
The continuous value creation and strategic enablement of stakeholders during times of uncertainty and change

Organization Resilience



Resilience DNA

Embedded values and principles of an organization's philosophy on business and how to operate



Agility & Flexibility

Adopting agile organization design and workforce planning with the ability to quickly learn and adjust



Risk Management

Proactive and holistic approach to risk management that is forward-thinking and integrated into business strategy

Case Study

For this organization achieving “Organization Resilience” was about building the capability for proactive management and adjusting the organization structure and workforce plan to accommodate uncertainty.

01

Revamped the overall operating model with streamlined process, governance and protocols on how to conduct organization reengineering and workforce planning

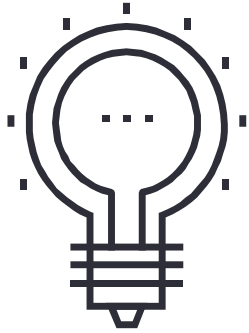
02

Established a dedicated function (COE in HR) focusing on delivering top quality services on organization design and workforce planning

03

Embraced the element of organization and workforce effectiveness in leader's performance metrics

People Resilience



Continuous Learning

Enable ongoing upskilling and reskilling of people with the right capabilities for a dynamic environment



Adversity Quotient

Embrace a growth mindset and integrate to your total talent management ecosystem



Compassionate Self Care

Build greater self-reflection, setting healthy boundaries and putting "care for people" as a decision criteria

Case Study

To achieve a high level of people resilience this organization double-downed on creating a culture of self-learning.

01

Developed a comprehensive and robust skill taxonomy providing not only clarity but also art of possible for employees to understand the learning landscape

02

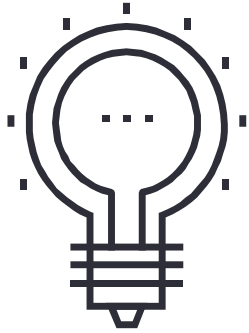
Revamped the learning environment with greater accessibility to self-learning materials and structured on-job training

03

Established clear linkage of development to an updated career architecture to drive greater motivation and provide clear career longevity within the organization



HR Resilience



Entrepreneurial Mindset

Evolve from being a service provider to running the HR function as a business



Value Anchored

Focus on the “HR Values” needed to operate in an adaptive and cohesive manner with a defined value chain



Technology Enabled

Adopt the appropriate technology for speedy reflection and adjustment

Case Study

For HR to add the most value and be a resilient enterprise function, this HR organization reshaped its way of working to have a stronger tie with business performance.

01

Embraced a “P&L” concept for the HR function by revamping the budgeting process and introducing “Profitability Goals” as part of functional performance metrics

02

Tied the prioritization and planning of HR initiatives to the principle in driving greater profitability not only within HR but the broader business

03

Created a culture and way of working where HR team members clearly understood their contribution and accountability for the financial performance



Word Cloud On

What is key to
addressing
uncertainty?

What is your
organization
doing to manage
uncertainty?

Level of Maturity?



AI in Action:

HR tech innovations shaping the future
of human capital management

SPEAKER

Paul Tucker

Partner, Workforce Advisory Services,
EY Canada



Agenda

01

Agentic AI Overview

02

AI use cases in HCM

03

EY.ai Maturity Model

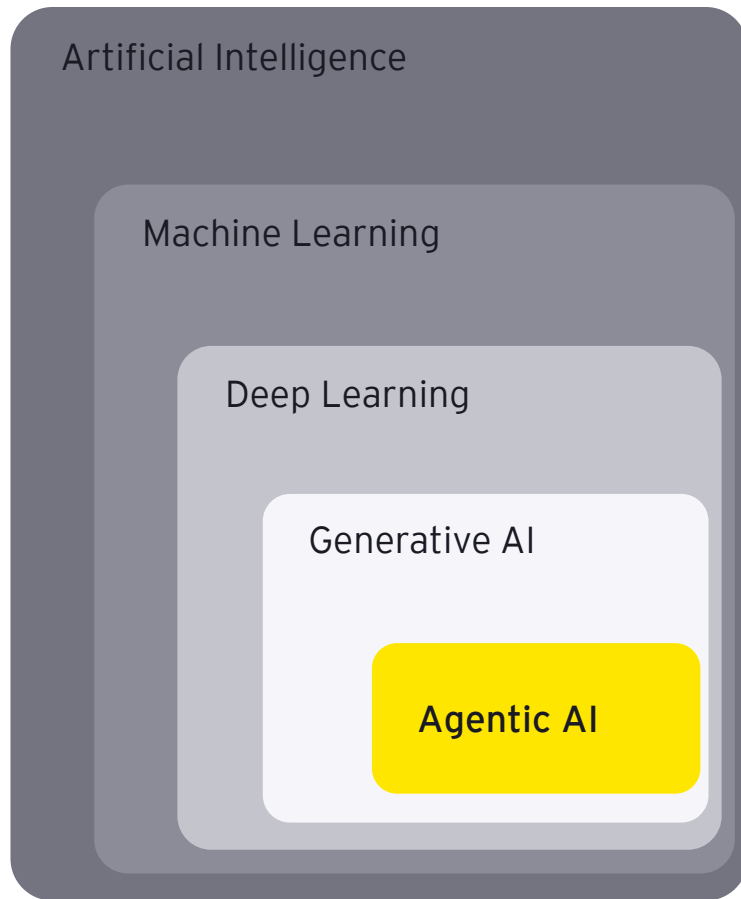
04

FlexiGen AI

Agentic AI Overview



The Journey to Agentic AI



01

1956

Artificial intelligence

A field of computer science that seeks to create intelligent machines capable of reproducing or surpassing human intelligence.

02

1997

Machine learning

A subset of AI that allows machines to learn from existing data and enhance it to make decisions or predictions.

03

2006

Deep learning

A machine learning technique in which layers of neural networks are used to process data and make decisions.

04

2017

Generative AI

Creates new written, visual and auditory content from existing instructions or data.

05

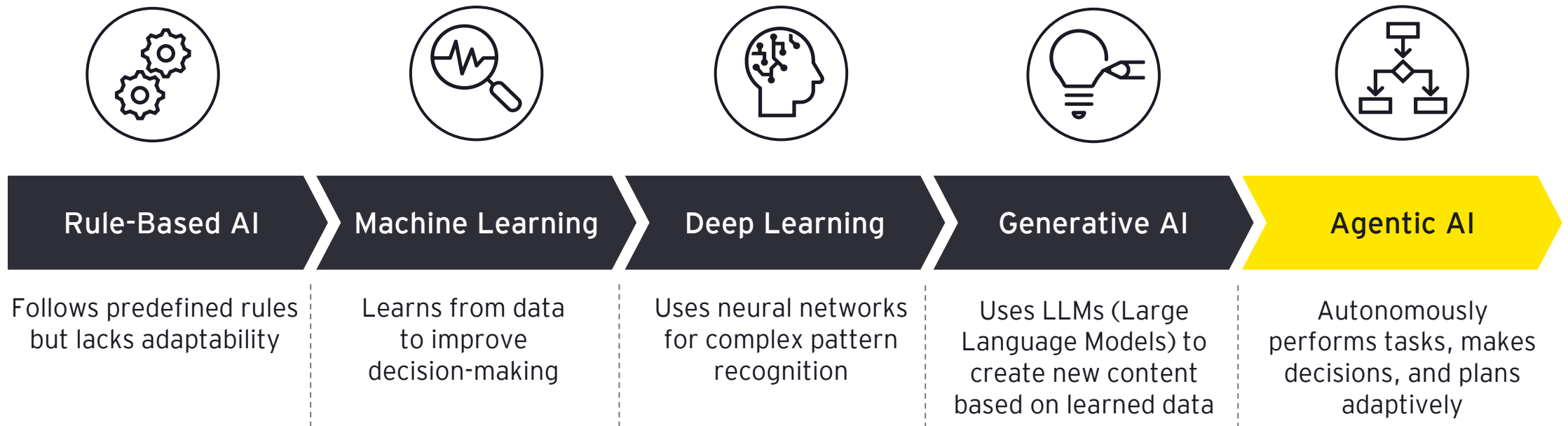
2024

Agentic AI

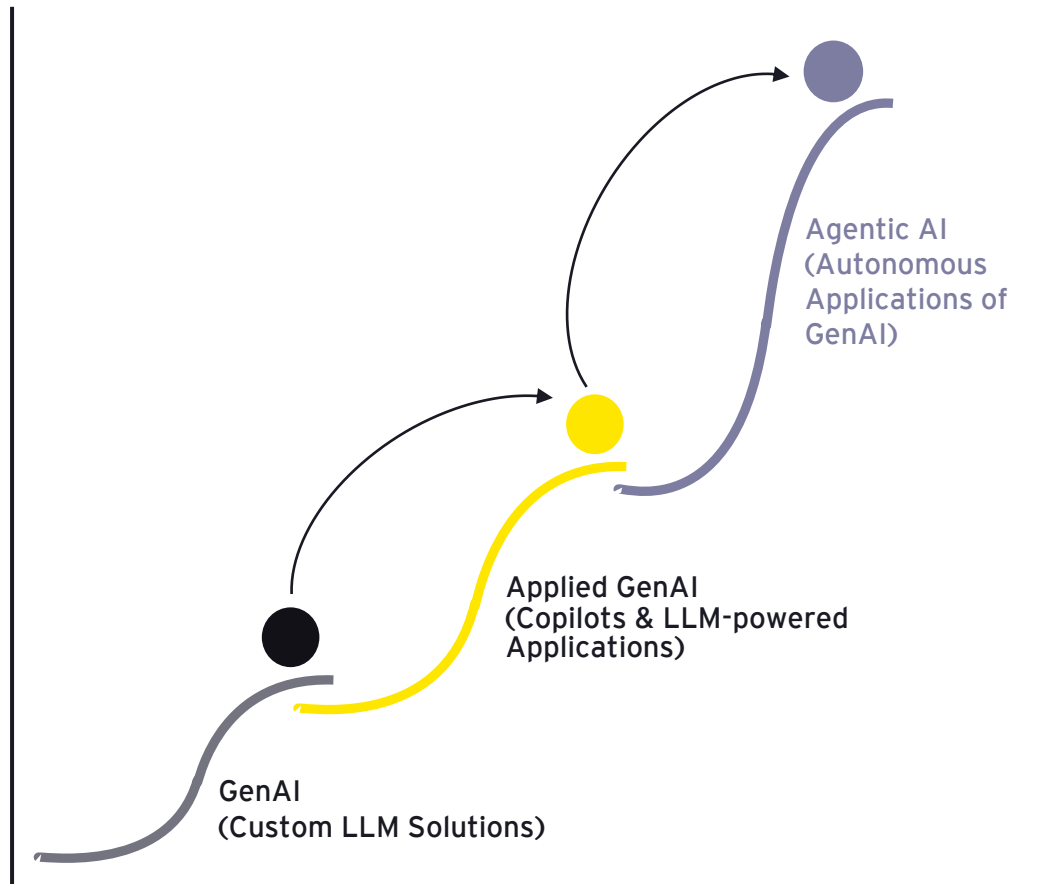
Autonomously performs tasks, makes decisions, and plans adaptively.

The Journey to Agentic AI

Agentic AI is software that **autonomously perceives, acts, reacts, and interacts** with both humans and other agents alike in achieving its goals. It represents a significant evolution in Generative AI, transitioning from **reactive systems to proactive, autonomous agents** capable of making decisions and taking actions independently to achieve specific goals. Unlike traditional AI, agentic AI systems are designed to **autonomously plan, learn and adapt** to new information and environments.



Agentic AI – The Next Wave of AI



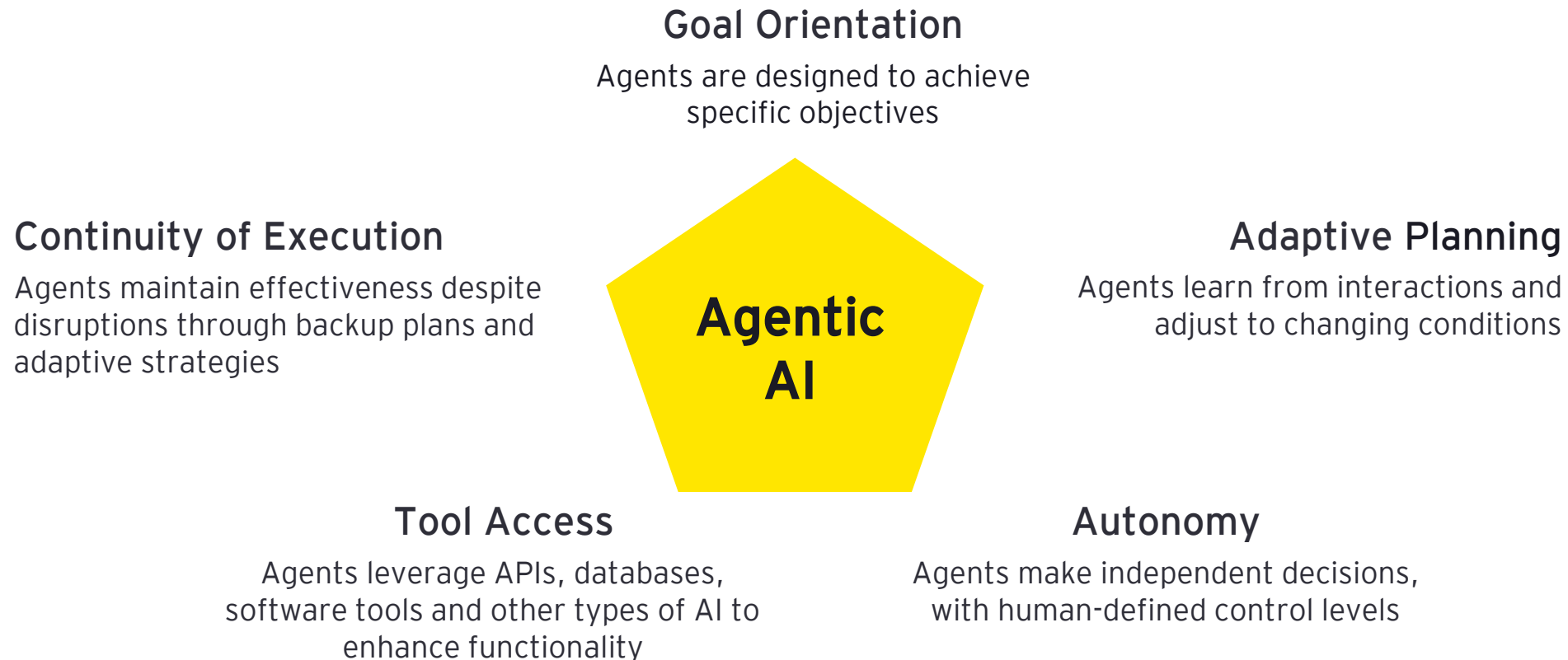
The emergence of Agentic AI represents a transformative shift towards autonomous and intelligent operations...

Enabling AI systems to independently make decisions and coordinate complex tasks...

Driving the potential for unprecedented innovation and operational reshaping across all organizations

What is Agentic AI?

Agentic AI is advancing towards **greater autonomy, enhanced reasoning and more complex interactions**, driving transformation in customer engagement and operations. As agentic AI evolves, five key elements define its scope and capabilities. These agents often leverage other types of AI, including Generative AI, to support decision-making, content creation and task execution



AI Use Cases in HCM



Talent Acquisition: Streamlining Recruitment Efforts

Organizations are facing inefficiencies in their recruitment processes, impacting the quality of hires, hiring speed and overall recruitment experience.

Challenges



Difficulty identifying top talent



Inconsistent job descriptions



Inefficient recruitment processes

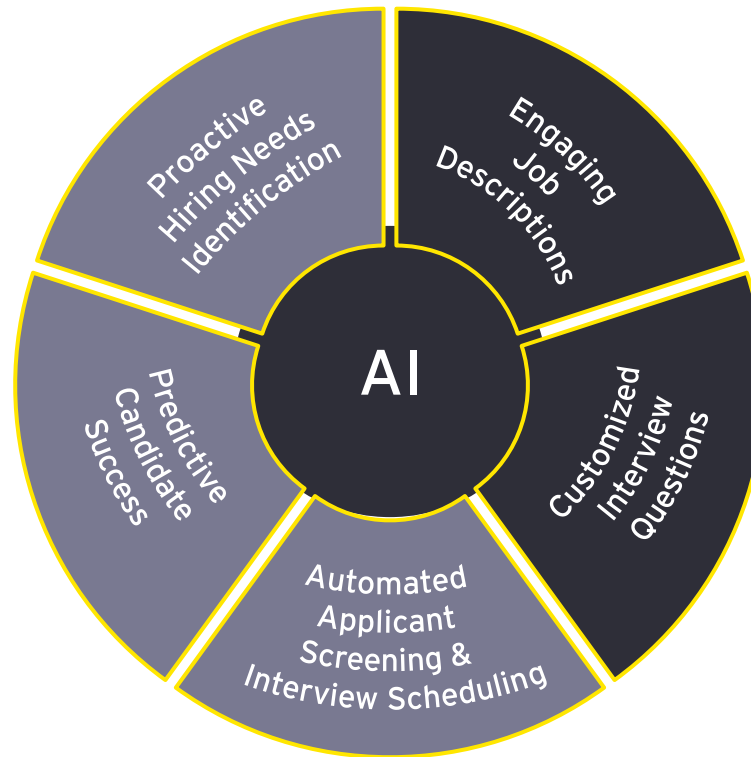
Legend



Gen AI



Agentic AI



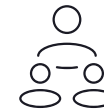
Benefits



Consistency in hiring practices



Proactive workforce planning



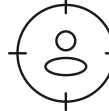


More diverse and qualified candidate pool



Training and Development: Personalized Training

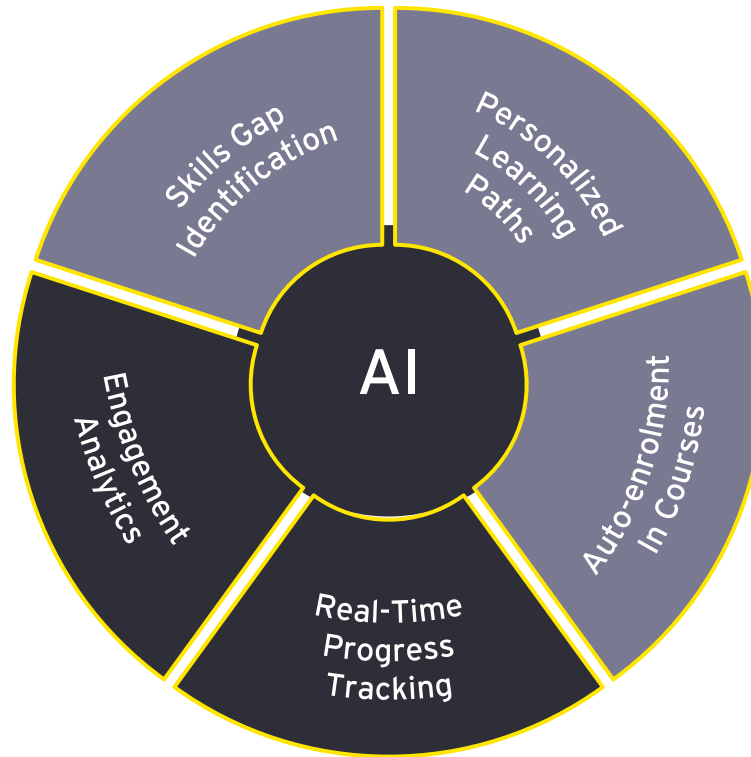
Organizations struggle to identify and address skill gaps within their workforce, resulting in inconsistent training outcomes and reduced engagement in development programs. It is essential that AI-driven training solutions empower employees by providing them with clear insights into their development.

Challenges




-  Absence of centralized data
-  One-size-fits-all training programs
-  Limited employee progress tracking

Legend

-  Gen AI
-  Agentic AI



Benefits

-  Enhanced employee experience and higher retention rates
-  Improved operational efficiency
-  Targeted skill development

HR Operations: Workforce Planning

Organizations are facing inefficiencies in their recruitment processes, impacting the quality of hires, hiring speed and overall recruitment experience.

Challenges



Difficulty in identifying turnover root causes



Lack of evidence-based workforce plans



Reactive hiring and training efforts

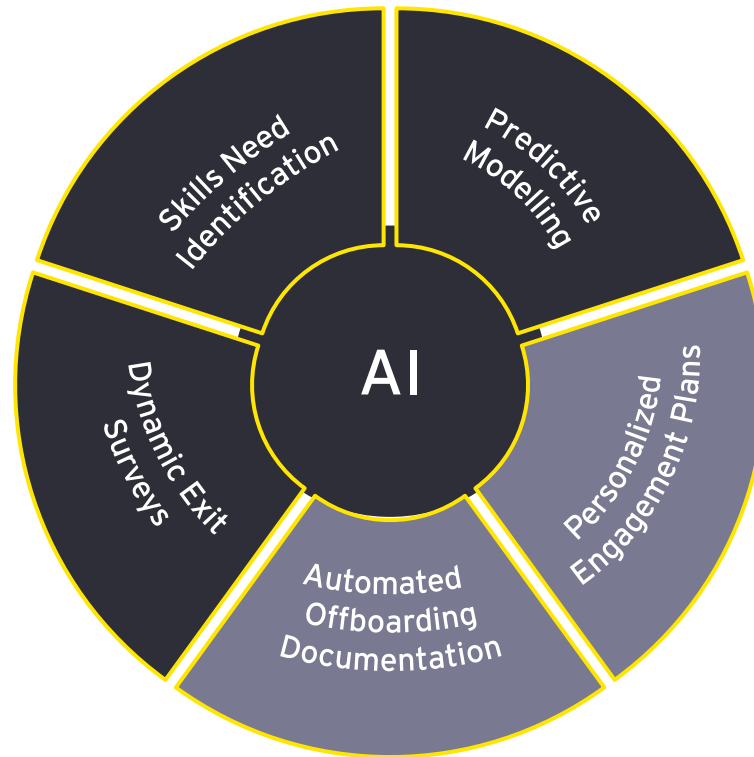
Legend



Gen AI



Agentic AI



Benefits



Address turnover issues and improve employee retention



Enhanced employee engagement



Proactive talent management

Payroll : Navigating Tax Regulation Changes

Organizations are facing challenges in keeping its payroll processes compliant with rapidly changing tax regulations. The complexity of tax laws, frequent updates and the need for accurate payroll processing create a burden on the HR and Finance teams.

Challenges



Tracking tax law changes and ensuring compliance



Time sensitivity due to prompt compliance requirements



Resource Constraints due to understaffing or lack of expertise

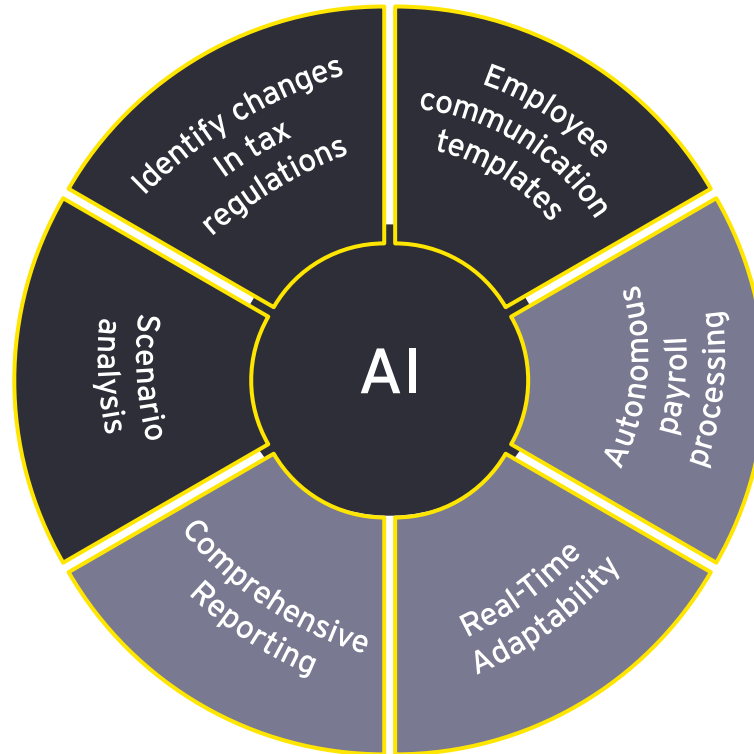
Legend



Gen AI



Agentic AI



Benefits



Automated compliance updates enable autonomous payroll processing











Improved compliance accuracy through real-time adaptability



Efficiency gains through scalability (scale compliance efforts without increasing resources)

Considerations

While AI offers powerful benefits in HR, it is essential to address the following considerations to achieve responsible and people-centered outcomes.

Considerations	Details
 Bias and Fairness	Risk of reinforcing discrimination through biased data or algorithms
 Privacy	Sensitive employee and candidate data must be protected and used responsibly and clearly
 Data Responsibility and Surveillance	Collecting and analyzing employee data should prioritize transparency and consent
 Fairness in Opportunities	AI-driven recommendations must ensure equal access to development regardless of role, background or past performance.
 Equity	AI must ensure predictions do not disproportionately target specific employee groups
 Incomplete Insights and Variability	Personalized and recommended plans will vary based on the completeness of the data; identical requests may yield different responses depending on the inputs provided
 Accuracy and reliability	Organizations must ensure that the AI systems are reliable (beware of hallucinations as there is a potential of the AI making up facts)
 Data security	Robust security measures must be implemented to safeguard payroll information

EY.ai Maturity Model



The EY.ai Maturity Model helps our clients explore their current and aspired future state AI adoption capabilities

Dimensions explored:



Data and Technology: Measures for AI Implementation



FlexiGen AI



FlexiGen AI

A generative AI platform...

...designed for everyone

Drag, drop and discover

Visual canvas and comprehensive toolbox equips low code and pro code developers in simplifying complex tasks allowing them to explore, experiment, build and share solutions, enhancing collaboration and driving AI innovation

...to create custom solutions in minutes (not months!)

Scale and customize

Platform built from scratch at EY, accelerates AI development by enabling rapid iterations, extensive customizations and built-in scalability with each feature developed to scale for enterprise demands

...where precision meets clarity

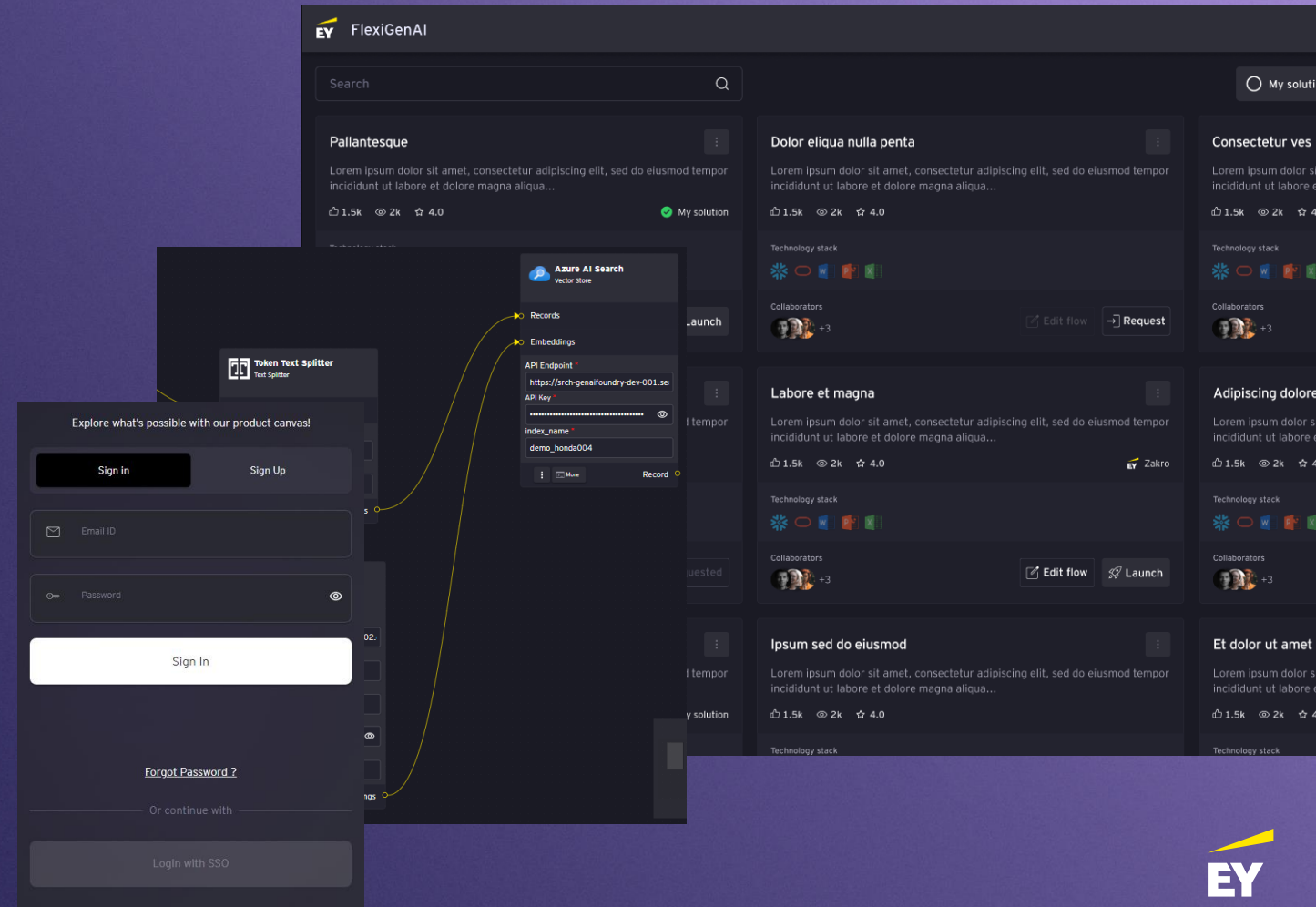
Innovate with confidence

Graph-based search engine grounded in rigorous research, delivers highly accurate results by mirroring human thinking and offering transparency to support outcomes, reducing countless hours spent on deciphering results

An enterprise ready platform for building generative AI solutions like chatbots, document generation tools and more

Product Highlights

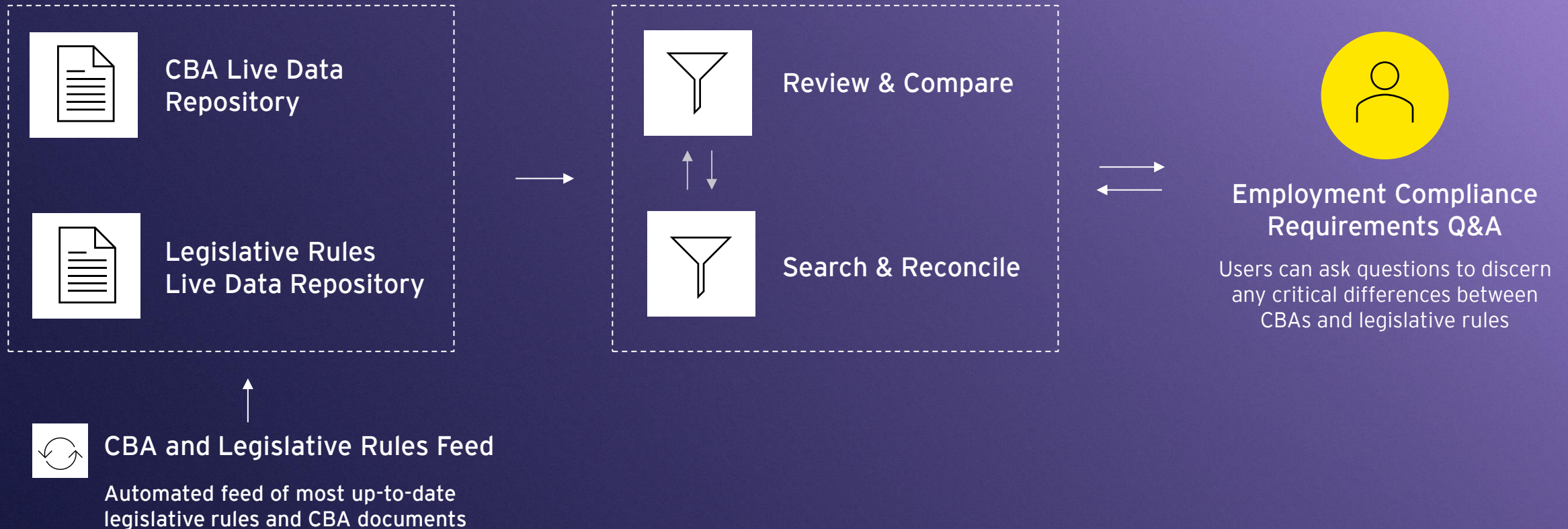
- ✓ Visual drag-and-drop builder and debugger
- ✓ Comprehensive tools - connectors, language models, etc
- ✓ Intuitive for both technical and non-technical users
- ✓ Scalable for enterprise deployment
- ✓ Effective utilization of unstructured and structured data
- ✓ More accurate and traceable responses
- ✓ Enterprise-ready with security, scalability, and compliance
- ✓ Responsible AI capabilities



FlexiGen Case Study: Employment Compliance Requirements Review

High Level Demo Requirement

Retail-focused “must-know” information for Spain employment law to support policies, process and system configurations for scheduling, HRIS and payroll - discerning any critical difference in compliance or common practice in areas especially related to compensation, working hours, benefits





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How geopolitics directly impacts talent acquisition, retention and mobility



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How geopolitics directly impacts talent acquisition, retention and mobility

Panel discussion



**George
Reis**

Partner, EY Law,
EY Canada



**Leah
Shinh**

National Leader,
Mobility Tax,
EY Canada



**Batia
Stein**

Managing Partner,
EY Law, Immigration,
EY Canada

Geopolitics and workforce strategy

01

Panel discussion on how geopolitics directly impacts talent acquisition, retention and mobility

02

Strategies to address geopolitical challenges, and how to build resilience in time of immense change

03

Small group breakouts to share thoughts and strategies

Geopolitics and workforce strategy

Strategies and practical tips to address geopolitical challenges

Covid-19 pandemic

Russia-Ukraine war

Middle East conflicts

Canada housing crisis and immigration restrictions

Global tariffs and trade

Canada international student restrictions

Canada-US interdependence and sovereignty

Proactive geopolitical risk management

Incorporate threats and opportunities into business strategy

Enhancing internal mobility

Leveraging existing workforce to quickly address geopolitical challenges

Strategic workforce planning

Using data and analytics to build workforce resilience

Geopolitics and workforce strategy

Small group breakouts



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Total Rewards: Keeping pace with changing times

Practical ways to adapt total
rewards plans to support employees
during uncertain times

■ ■ ■
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The better the world works.



Total rewards: Keeping pace with changing times

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Guiding Principles in Total Rewards Framework

1. Demonstrate Agility

Change is a constant and ability to adapt to change is a must.

2. Be open to Innovation

Innovation mindset in total rewards promotes adoption of approaches in design and delivery of benefit offerings, including flexibility and customization of benefits.

3. Pay Equity and Pay Transparency

Organizations that prioritize pay equity and pay transparency will be better positioned to address enhanced legislative requirements and to retain and attract talent.

4. Modernize Delivery of Benefits

Modernization assists with tracking and data gathering - allowing organizations to pivot quicker.

1. Agility as a Guiding Principle

Organizations that embrace agility:

- Stay ahead of competitors by adjusting their total rewards packages in real-time;
- Align the rewards system with the organization's current objectives and economic realities; and
- Regularly assess employee satisfaction with rewards and benefits and make timely adjustments that enhance engagement and retention.

Specific Tools:

Shift in Total Rewards Mix

Calibrating the allocation of total rewards offerings.

Performance-driven compensation

Utilizing awards that track share value or another metric that reflects the company's performance.

Market Benchmarking

Significant shifts in pay and legislative developments in pay transparency and pay equity drive the demand for market benchmarking.

2. Innovation as a Guiding Principle

Organizations that are open to innovation:

- Experiment with new reward strategies and quickly assess their effectiveness, resulting in more effective and appealing total rewards programs; and
- Leverage the rise of digital tools and platform to provide personalized rewards experiences, streamline processes, and enhance communication.

Specific Tools:

Customized Benefits Packages

Allow employees to tailor their benefits based on personal needs, such as selecting from various health plans, retirement options, and wellness programs.

Continuous Learning and Development

Provide access to ongoing training, online courses, and mentorship programs to help employees develop new skills and advance their careers.

Flexible Work Options

Offer flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, flexible hours, or compressed workweeks, to support work-life balance and accommodate diverse employee needs.

3. Pay Equity and Transparency

Organizations that embrace pay equity and transparency:

- **Enhanced Employee Trust and Morale:** When organizations are transparent about pay structures and ensure equitable compensation, employees feel valued and respected, leading to increased trust and overall morale within the workplace.
- **Attraction and Retention of Talent:** Companies that prioritize pay equity are more likely to attract diverse talent and retain employees, as candidates often seek employers who demonstrate fairness and commitment to equal pay for equal work.

Specific Tools:

Conduct Regular Pay Audits

Regularly analyze compensation data to identify and address any pay disparities among employees performing similar roles. This can help ensure compliance with pay equity laws.

Engage in External Benchmarking

Regularly compare compensation practices with industry standards and competitors to ensure that pay rates are competitive and equitable.

Establish Clear Pay Structures

Develop transparent pay scales and salary ranges for each position within the organization. Clearly communicate these structures to employees to promote understanding and trust.

4. Modernizing Benefits Delivery as a Guiding Principle

Benefits of modernization of delivery of employee benefits include:

- Enabling the organization to collect and analyze data on employee usage and preferences, which will inform data-driven decisions;
- Provide employee with easy access to their benefits information and overall employee experience; and
- Streamline administration and reduce administrative costs and improve the overall efficiency of benefits management.

Specific Tools:

Virtual Healthcare

Embracing virtual healthcare as forum for delivery of medical care through employer-sponsored plans.

Increased reward choice

Enable employees to select how to allocate employer-paid credits and introduction of wellness accounts.

Consumer Grade Digital Reward Tools

Increase the sophistication of the digital platforms for employee benefits.

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Harnessing the transformative power of AI in your organization

May 8, 2025



The better the question. The better the answer.
The better the world works.



Harnessing the transformative power of AI in your organization

Panel discussion



**Andrea
Wolfson**

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**Robert
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Partner, People
Consulting & AI Co-leader,
EY Canada

Harnessing the transformative power of AI in your organization

01

What is the change we are talking about?

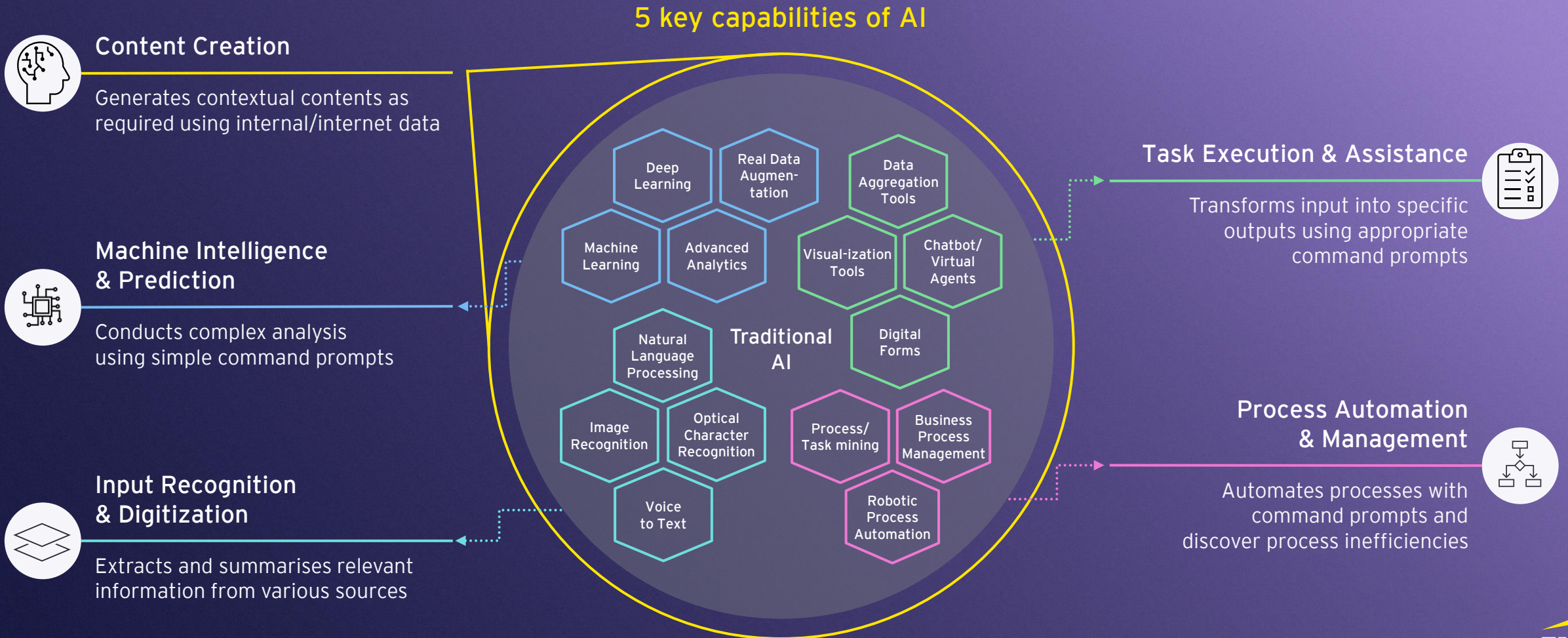
02

What is unique about this change?

03

Q&A from us and throughout

Established market-leading insights along with new perspective from executives, ground us in data to navigate the next five years



To adopt AI, we need to fundamentally shift and re-wire our deeply entrenched work patterns

BROAD LLM USAGE



FROM: I think of task and complete the task



TO: I think of task, I recognize the opportunity to use GenAI, I am fluent in general AI usage, apply agency to what I am doing and complete my task

AGENTIC AI



FROM: I think of task and complete the task



TO: I am prompted to review an output, am fluent in the workings of the agent, apply agency and direct the agent to complete the task

In summary we are flipping the paradigm

from...

People executing

Processes presented with

Data powered by

Technology

to...

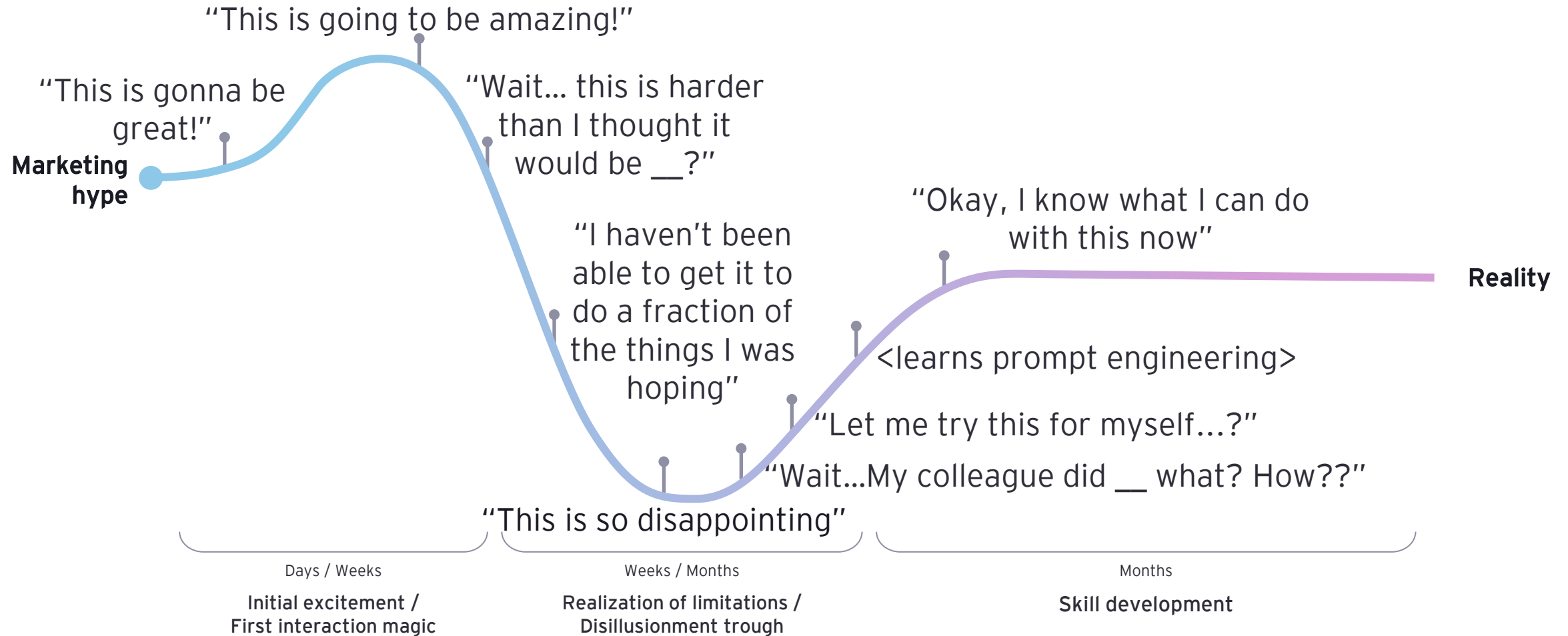
Technology powered by

Data executing

Processes managed by

People

This is actually really hard for employees to grasp and integrate into their work patterns



Learning to use GenAI takes significant time and effort compared to other technologies and we are all figuring this out at the same time

10

hours

of meaningful usage

Ethan Mollick, a Professor at Wharton, states that engaging in 10 hours of meaningful GenAI usage can unlock optimal value from GenAI

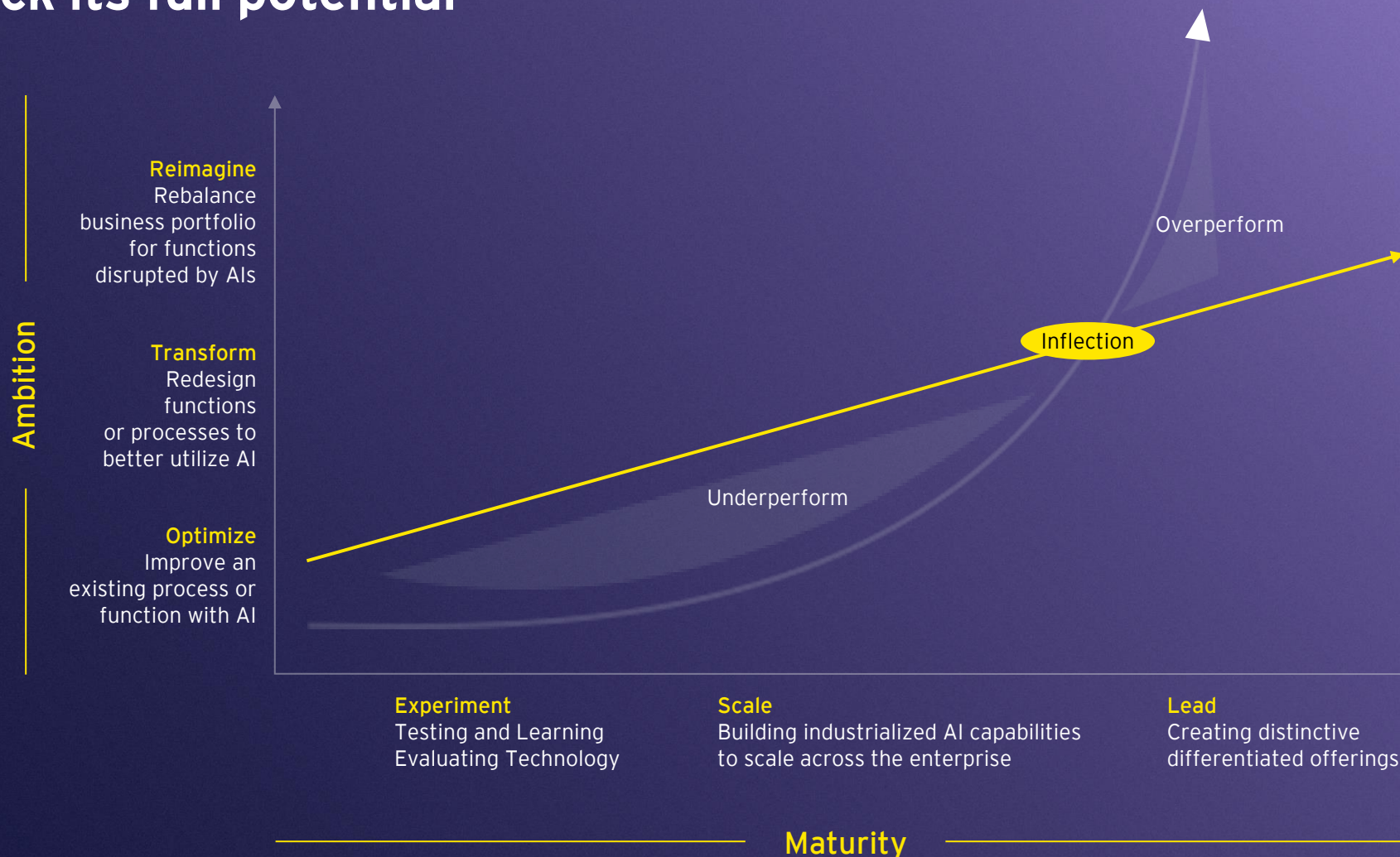
11

weeks

of consistent use

Microsoft research indicates consistent use of M365 Copilot over 11 weeks can establish proficiency required to enhance work experiences

The risk is that GenAI technology is reaching an inflection point where focused change management is crucial for leaders and employees to unlock its full potential



Organizations will need differentiated approaches to meet new skilling challenges to develop an AI-enabled workforce

	Build the technology	Implement the technology	Adapt to the technology
Workforce	AI professionals (1%-2% of workforce)	Technology function: Technology professionals, project managers, software engineering, business analysts Project and Program Management: Change managers, project managers	Whole workforce
Focus	Integration with existing systems and processes	Build trust in AI	Upskill to use the AI
Key skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">AI interfacingMachine learning proficiencyAI programming languagesNatural language processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prompt engineeringStrategyProject managementCompliance and ethicsChangeCommunication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">LeadershipAnalytical thinkingDataPeople skillsOvercome evolving AI "blind spots"
Employer considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recruitment of the professional skills required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Speed, scope and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Personalized learning programsTeam upskilling sessionsCompany-wide learning

Overcoming AI "blind spots"

For certain skills, **time and continuous learning** is needed to achieve proficiency.

If task displacement removes the opportunity to learn and develop the by-product skills, which means proficiency "blind spots" develop over time, particularly affecting "junior" staff.

Potential implications:

- A steeper learning curve – sink or swim and increased risk exposure for business
- Requirement for simulated learning environments without AI
- Increased focus on the "way we do it" rather than "how" or "what" we do

There are characteristics of this change that are unlike other recent disruptive technologies

Leaders are learning at the same time as their organization

Employees will experience higher highs and lower lows on this journey

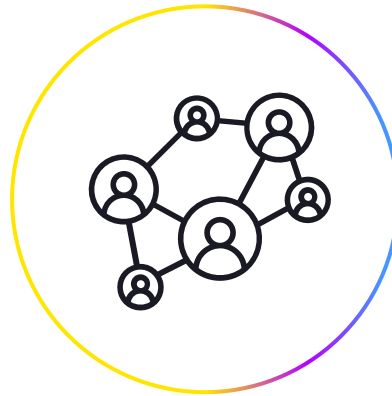
Innovation-related cultural attributes will be more important than ever

There are also some common obstacles that can get in the way of adoption



Beliefs and perceptions

- Negative perceptions
- Complexity
- Security concerns
- Algorithmic aversion



Social influence

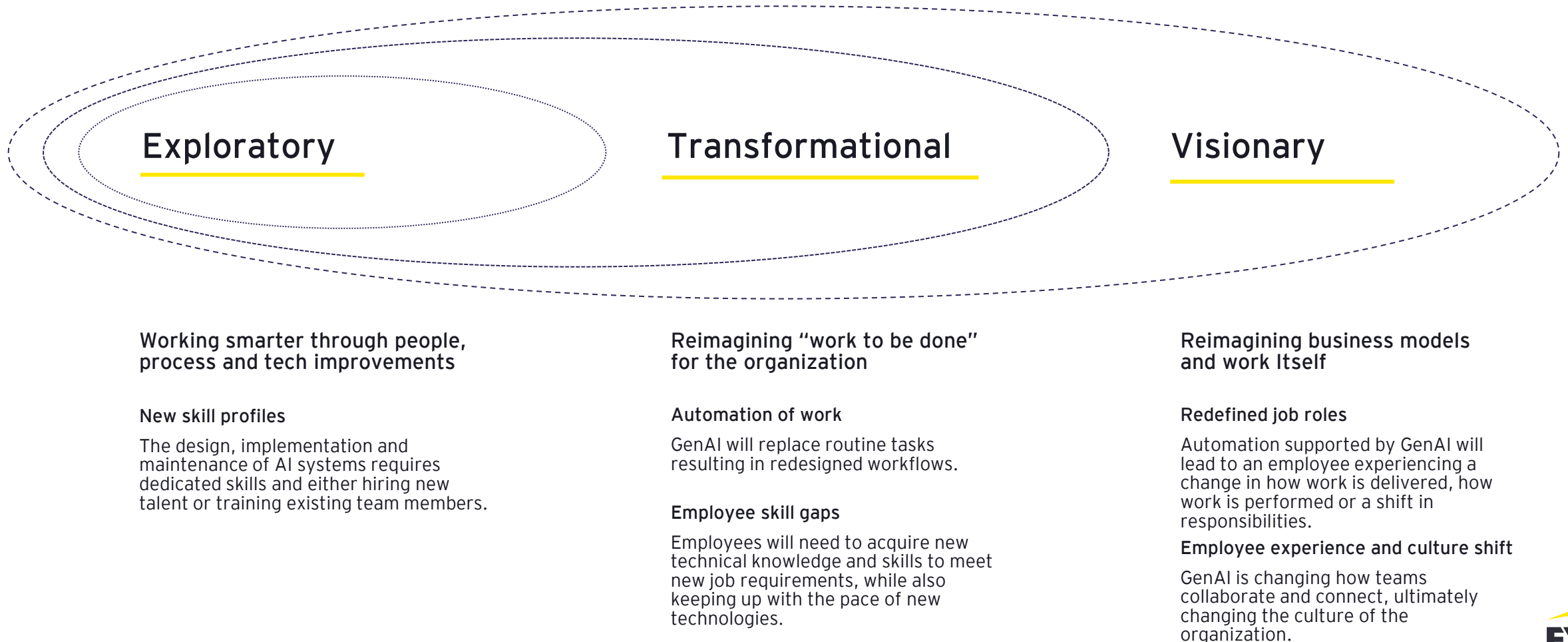
- Leadership misalignment
- Unclear norms
- Inconsistent expectations



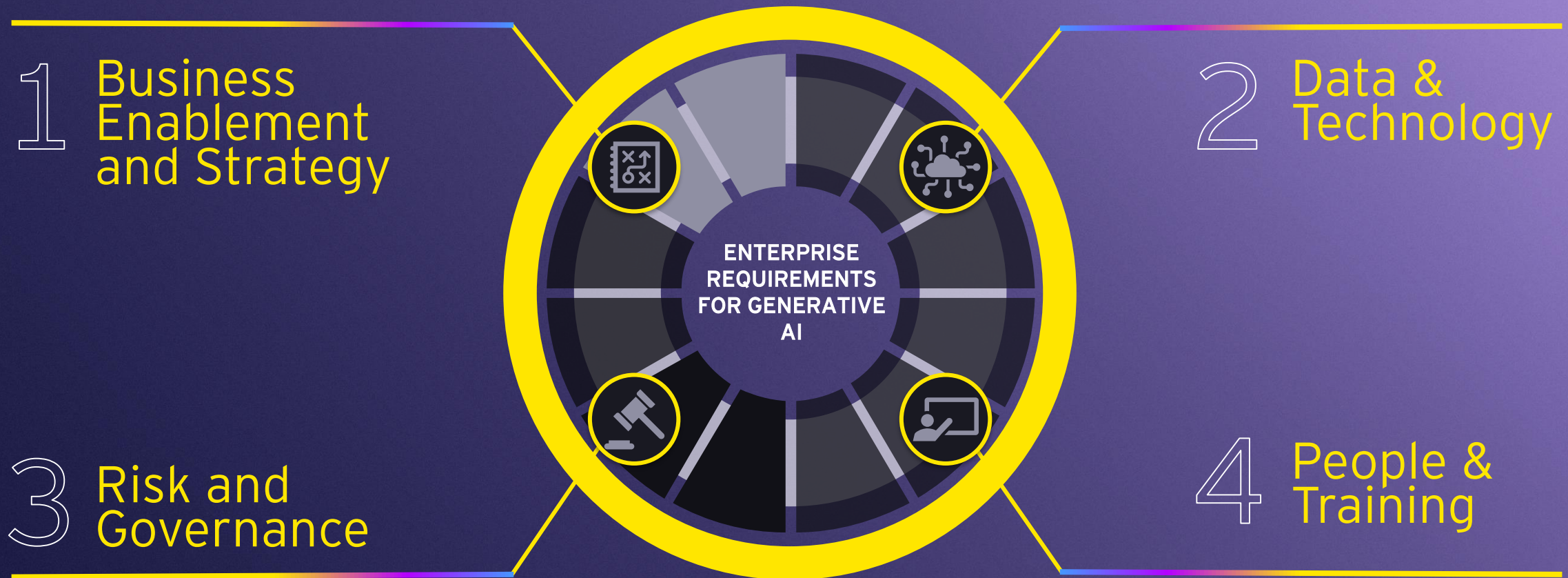
Help and resources

- Overwhelming information
- Point person being too far removed from daily work

Defining transformation 'horizons' sets the conditions to scale GenAI proficiency and adoption, align leadership expectations to the intended outcomes and help shape the employee experience



GenAI Activation relies on integrated efforts and enhancements across four core pillars



Q & A



Irrespective of the level of your organization's maturity in risk, governance, data and analytics for GenAI, careful focus needs to be given now to leadership, employees and the organization



Lead from the top

Provide customized leadership immersion on GenAI and make it a key priority for leaders to:

- Use GenAI themselves and set clear and evolved expectations of their workforce
- Deeply understand how GenAI can transform their business and are evolving their strategies



Drive mandatory mastery

- Broad training and skill development programs
- Continuous learning opportunities
- Strong champion network
- Create a central marketplace for GenAI



Evolve the culture

- Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement
- Provide transparent communication
- Involve employees in the process

Thank You



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C-suite insights: Navigating leadership, innovation and transformation



SPEAKER AND SPECIAL GUESTS

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