



# Shaping the future workforce

## How HR leads the skills evolution with AI

**Driving productivity,  
growth &  
workforce transformation  
in the age of AI**

Webinar | 16 June 2026 | 10:00 – 11:00am

# Today's speakers



**Katie Nightingale**

Director  
Transformation & People



**Beth Walton**

Manager  
Transformation & People



**Adil Hafidi**

Director  
Talent Solutions



**Jacky Griffiths**

Director  
Business Risk Services -  
People & Culture



**Gareth Turney**

Head of People Function  
AI & Change



# Today's agenda

## 01 Setting the context

*Why workforce transformation matters now*

## 02 HR Leader Insights

*Key findings from our 2026 HRD Survey*

## 03 HR as a strategic leader

*Moving from support to skills architect*

## 04 Future skills in practice

*What they really mean – and how to build them*

## 05 Building the workforce roadmap

*From insight to action: a practical approach*

## 06 Transformation in action

*Learnings from a HR change leader*

## 07 Leading people through the AI shift

*Change management focus*

Q&A · Key takeaways & next steps

# 1 Setting the context

*Why workforce transformation matters now*

# The AI reality: people, not technology, are the challenge

**85%**

of jobs that will exist in  
2030  
have not been invented yet

*World Economic Forum*

**44%**

of core skills will be  
disrupted  
in the next 5 years

*WEF Future of Jobs 2025*

**163%**

productivity gains seen by  
AI leaders vs 2018

*PwC 2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer*

**Only 16%**

of HR functions describe  
themselves  
as 'AI-ready' today

*GT HRD Survey 2026*

## The real challenge isn't technology — it's enabling our people

As AI reshapes how organisations operate, HR and Transformation leaders face a defining question: **how do you move from AI ambition to measurable action?** Roles are evolving, skills are becoming outdated, and the window to act is narrowing.

# 2 HR Leader Insights

*Key findings from our 2026 HRD Survey*

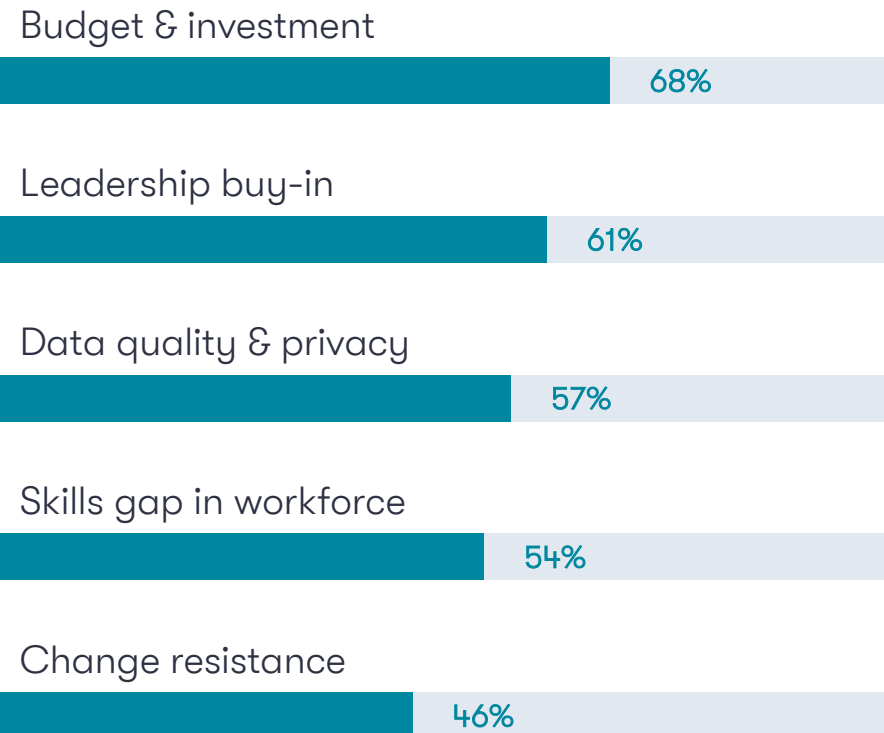
# What HR leaders told us: priorities, barriers and the AI gap

GT HRD Survey 2026 · 212 respondents · Private and public sector

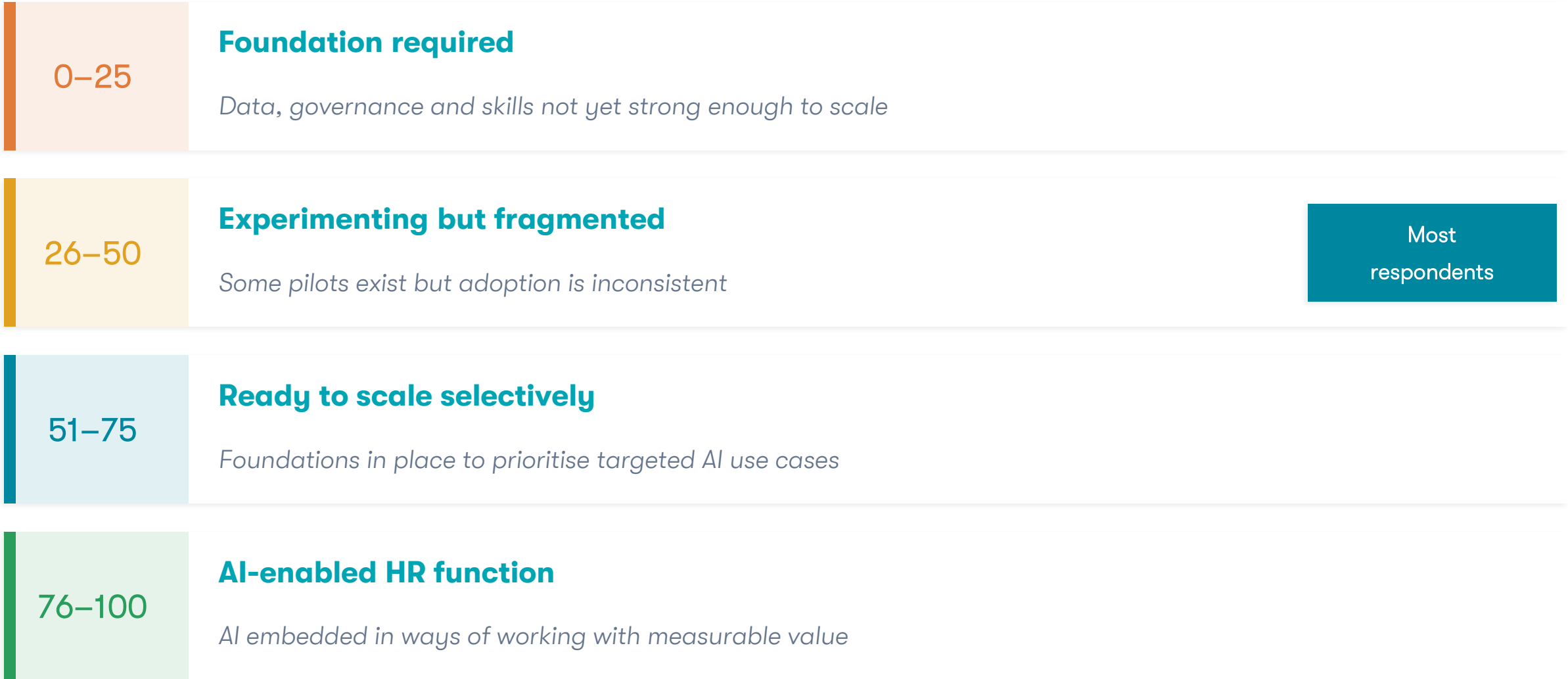
## Top HR Priorities

- Workforce planning & skills development
- Leadership capability & engagement
- Digital & AI-enabled HR transformation
- Talent attraction and retention
- DEI and employee experience

## Biggest Barriers to AI Adoption



# The AI readiness gap: where HR functions stand today



# Balancing investing for the horizon, not just the foreground

## Long-term value creation

- Rethink how value is created
- Redesign processes end to end
- Reshape the organisation itself

## Efficiency gains

Automation and role changes

## Cost reduction

Immediate productivity uplift

## Upskilling

Teams equipped for AI tools

AI investment made



# 3 HR as a strategic leader

*Moving from support function to architect of skills and capability*

# From transactional to transformational: the new HR mandate

## HR was...

- Role profile and competency framework guardian
- Recruitment and talent process administration
- Annual training programmes or set, classroom-based learning
- Reporting headcount to Finance
- Reactive to business change



## HR is accelerating...

- Strategic architect of skills & capability
- Designer of AI-augmented talent pipelines
- Curator of continuous, personalised learning
- Co-owner of workforce financial planning
- Leading and enabling transformation

# How AI is reshaping the skills of the HR function

HR Area	Becoming less manual	Level up	Build (new capability)
Recruitment	Manual CV sift, scheduling	Inclusive hiring judgement	AI-assisted sourcing & bias controls
L&D	Generic content creation	Learning architecture & coaching	Personalised AI learning pathways
Workforce Planning	Spreadsheet-heavy planning	Strategic trade-off thinking	Skills taxonomy & scenario modelling
HR Service Delivery	Manual triage & policy lookups	Empathy in sensitive cases	AI agent/ chatbot governance & knowledge management
People Analytics	Manual dashboarding	Insight framing & storytelling	Predictive analytics

# 4 **Future skills in practice**

*What they really mean — and where the gaps are most critical*

# The skills that matter most: a practical framework

## Technical & AI Skills

- AI awareness & prompting
- Data literacy
- Process redesign & automation
- Analytics & insight generation
- Responsible AI & governance

## Human & leadership skills

- Adaptability & continuous learning
- Change leadership & adoption
- Judgement, problem solving & ethical reasoning
- Consulting & commercial influence
- Communication, emotional intelligence & storytelling

## Critical Gaps Today

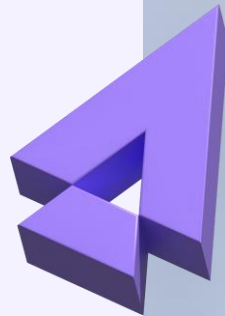
- 1 Change leadership
- 2 Responsible AI & governance
- 3 Role redesign & operating model
- 4 AI tool adoption & behaviour change
- 5 Data literacy in HR roles



# Grant Thornton and Estu launch new capability framework to help clients power innovation and transformation at scale

Centre for Innovation & Change

A new practice-led capability framework designed to help organisations rapidly build in-house skills to deliver innovation and transformation.





# One Centre. Multiple ways to build transformation capability

## Part of the Centre for Innovation & Change

Co-developed by Grant Thornton and delivered by Estu, the Centre for Innovation & Change is a practice-led framework for building in-house transformation capability at pace. It brings together a focused portfolio of apprenticeship programmes designed to meet organisations where they are - from developing individual leaders and early-career talent, to embedding transformation capability across teams and functions. Built around real organisational challenges, learners apply new skills directly in role - turning strategy into action and delivering measurable impact from day one.

## Core programmes within the Centre for Innovation & Change

 <b>Innovation Academy</b> Grow future talent	 <b>Innovation &amp; Change Leadership</b> Develop transformation leaders	 <b>Bespoke Transformation Academies</b> Embed capability at scale
<p>For early-career professionals and emerging talent entering roles that support innovation and change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop practical capability from day one</li> <li>• Strengthen organisational talent pipelines</li> <li>• Support long-term workforce development and social mobility</li> </ul>	<p>For those leading innovation, service improvement and complex change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied, work-based learning around live organisational challenges</li> <li>• Blends service design, systems thinking, innovation strategy and change leadership</li> <li>• Delivers measurable impact while building professional accreditation</li> </ul>	<p>For organisations delivering major change who need consistent capability across teams and functions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-designed around organisational priorities</li> <li>• Multiple cohorts aligned to live transformation programmes</li> <li>• Creates sustainable, enterprise-wide capability over time</li> </ul>
<b>18 Months + EPA</b>	<b>15 Months + EPA</b>	<b>Flexible</b>

### ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY Short bespoke programmes

Commercially funded, targeted interventions to address specific capability needs

# L6 Innovation and Change Leadership

## Partnership with ESTU

Developing confident, capable leaders who inspire teams and drive success.



### Duration

15-months +EPA

### Cost

Fully funded to £15,000 by the Apprenticeship Levy



### Qualification

Level 6 Service Designer Apprenticeship

CMI Award in L&M



### What is it?



Innovation and Change Leadership is a future-focused development programme designed for managers and professionals who lead, enable, or contribute to innovation and change within their organisation. It equips participants with the mindset, tools, and practical frameworks needed to lead complex transformation, embed innovation, and drive sustainable change, while supporting both personal leadership capability and organisational impact.



### Who is the programme for?

Ideal for professionals who are leading, contributing to, or preparing for innovation and change initiatives within their organisation. The programme supports individuals navigating complexity, transformation, and new ways of working, including:

- Managers and leaders driving innovation or organisational change
- Professionals leading projects, programmes, or transformation initiatives
- Individuals responsible for influencing stakeholders and shaping culture
- Employees identified as future change leaders or innovation champions
- Professionals seeking to build confidence in leading uncertainty and complexity



### What's covered?

Participants will build the leadership capability required to drive innovation and lead change in complex environments, including:

- Leading and embedding organisational change
- Innovation mindsets, methods, and practical tools
- Strategic thinking and decision-making in uncertainty
- Influencing stakeholders and building alignment
- Leading culture, behaviours, and sustainable transformation

# AI & Digital for Business Impact

Partnership with Teesside University



**A programme to enable individuals across a range of roles to learn AI and digital skills. These skills can be applied immediately to bring about business improvements and transformation.**



### Duration

12 months + 3 months apprenticeship assessment.



### Cost

£18,000 funded by apprenticeship levy



### Qualification

Level 4 Business Analyst Apprenticeship



### Who is the programme for?

Designed for individuals aiming to transition into roles that involve business Analysis, designed to support a range of job titles in the digital and business change sectors.



This programme helps organisations improve their processes, products, services, and software through effective use of AI and digital tools utilisation.



### Teaching location

Hybrid; online, and in person at London and Teesside University campuses.

### Delivery through four modules



### Core skills gained;

- Analytical skills:** data analysis skills to identify high-impact opportunities for change.
- Communication skills:** good communication skills to present your recommendations to different target audiences, including leadership.
- Digital skills:** Confident use of data, digital tools and AI to drive business improvements.
- Project management:** Ability to implement different approaches to project planning and implementation including agile.
- Technical knowledge:** Familiarisation with common analytics tools like Excel, Google Analytics and Microsoft Power BI and AI fundamentals
- Problem-solving:** Ability to identify data-informed solutions to business problems.

# 5 Building the workforce roadmap

*From insight to action: connecting skills, planning and investment*

# Designing meaningful roles in an AI-enabled organisation

AI affects tasks before it affects entire roles. Job design must follow.

## Think strategy first

Defining your business strategy and how AI will enable this, then considering what this means for your whole operating model.

## Break down the work

Map what AI will automate, augment and transform before redesigning jobs.

## Rethink entry-level roles

Clerical and entry-level roles face highest AI exposure. New career pathways must be designed proactively.

## Role evolution, not elimination

Most roles will reshape rather than disappear. Communicate this clearly to reduce fear and resistance.

## Career pathways must be visible

Employees need to see a future. AI-augmented career frameworks help retain talent through transition.

## Create future ready development

Clear, supportive routes to provide effective development for skills like critical thinking.

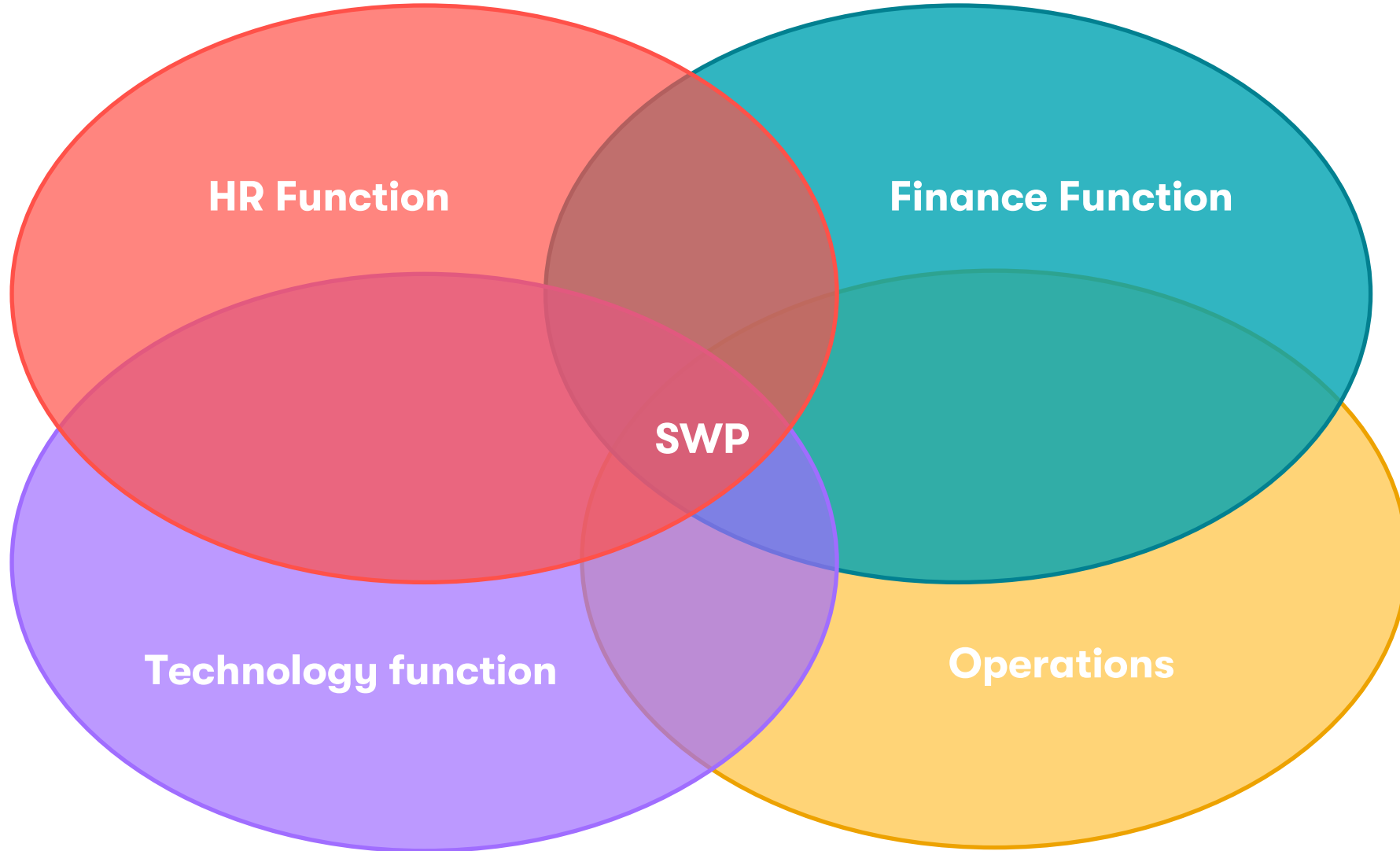
## Protect human judgement

Escalations, sensitive decisions, empathy and ethical reasoning become more — not less — important.

## Governance matters in role design

Embed accountability for AI decisions into role descriptions, not just governance policies.

# Strategic Workforce Planning: connecting people, cost and capability



# 6 Transformation in action

*Lessons from a HR change leader*



## **Gareth Turney**

**Head of People Function AI &  
Change at Standard Life**

- **Go slow to go quicker**
- **ROI Obsession, capability and skill building are your key success criteria**
- **Where is your organisations destination?**

# 7 **Leading people through the shift**

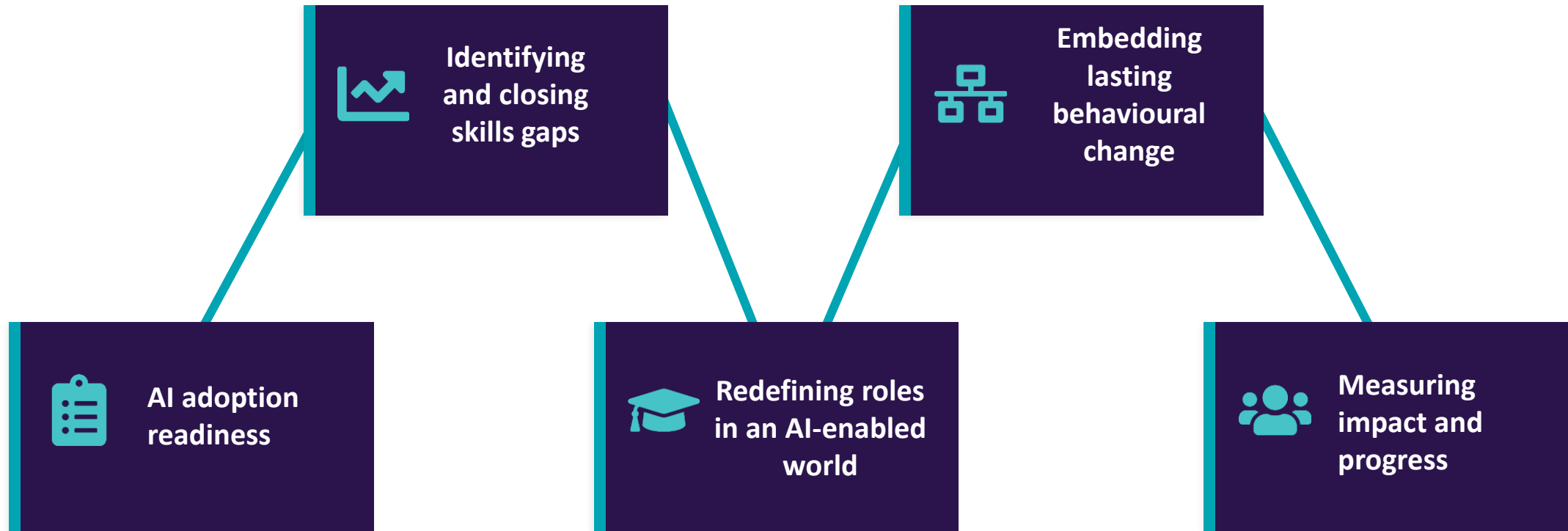
*Change management: the often-overlooked key to AI success*

# Risks to adoption – and how to get it right

Adoption Risk	What it signals	Recommended intervention
<b>Low awareness</b>	People don't understand AI use cases or implications	Awareness sessions, leader narrative, practical demos
<b>Low confidence</b>	Fear of getting it wrong or being replaced	Safe experimentation, role-based training, reassurance
<b>Low trust</b>	People don't trust AI outputs	Controls, explainability, human review points
<b>Low ownership</b>	No clear accountability for AI	Governance model, process owners, AI champions
<b>Behaviour stall</b>	Tools exist but people don't use them	Adoption plan, nudges, leadership role modelling

# Where organisations need the most help with AI adoption

Organisations are grappling with AI adoption at pace – navigating skills gaps, role disruption and the challenge of embedding lasting change.



# Panel discussion

# Key takeaways

01

The skills challenge is urgent — 44% of core skills will be disrupted in 5 years. HR can't wait for perfect information to act.

02

HR's role is fundamentally changing — from process guardian to strategic architect of workforce capability and AI adoption.

03

Future skills aren't just technical — change leadership, judgement and adaptability are as critical as AI or data literacy.

04

Workforce roadmaps need to connect HR and Finance — SWP is the bridge between people decisions and commercial outcomes.

05

Role design must follow task analysis — AI affects tasks before roles. Proactive design prevents unmanaged workforce churn.

06

Adoption is the bottleneck — most organisations have tools; the real gap is behaviour change, trust and capability confidence.



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