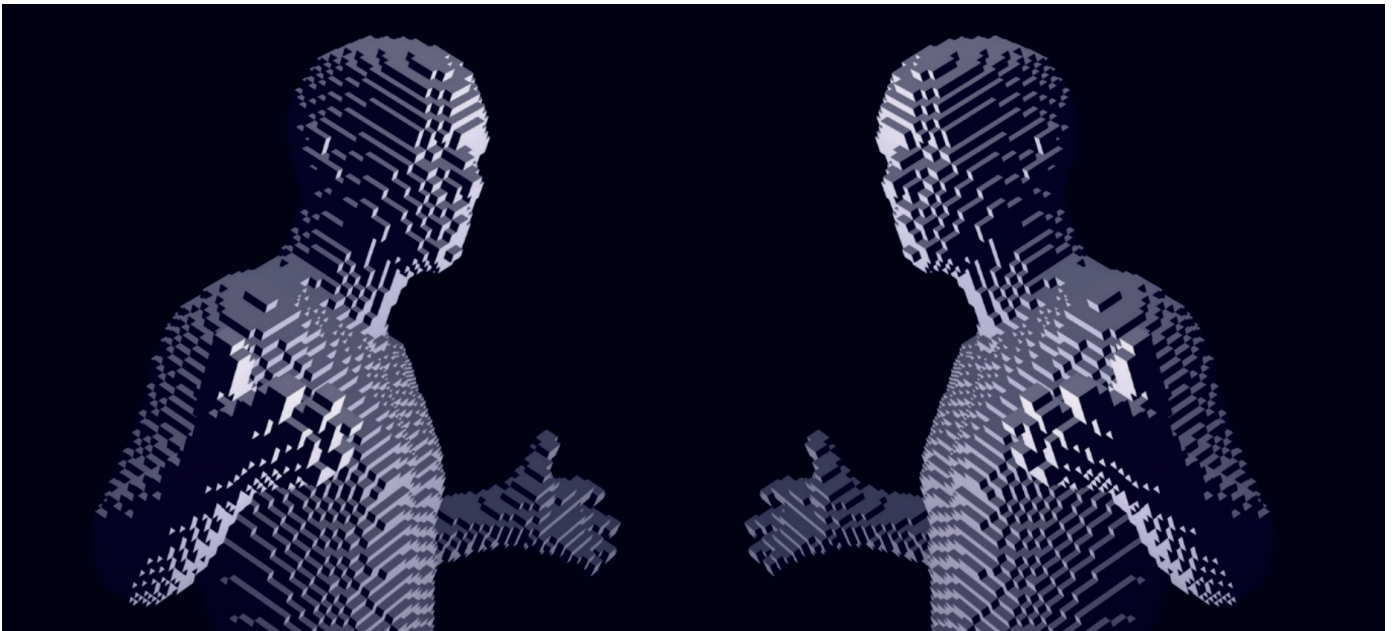


Traversing The Great Divide: How HR Professionals Facilitate Civil Conversations On The Future Of AI



Addressing AI Angst: 15 ways HR can best ensure productive, civil discourse on artificial intelligence - the preeminent hot-button tech topic spurring heated discussions, debates and disagreements.

As the digital era rages on, perhaps no technology topic is more polarising at the moment than that of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML). Specifically, the role these rapidly emerging nextgen technologies will, and should, play in our daily lives and professions.

In the ever-expanding realm of AI, having civil conversations that address the potential, and concerns surrounding this technology, has become increasingly challenging - a situation causing new challenges for HR professionals. The two most extreme camps - one fearing an apocalyptic future ruled by machines, and the other advocating for unchecked AI development - clash vehemently, leaving little room (nor inclinations) for more nuanced discussions.

Human Resource professionals play a critical role in facilitating civil and courteous conversation about AI in the workplace for several important reasons:

- **Ensuring Inclusive and Respectful Environment:** AI discussions can bring up

varying perspectives, concerns, and opinions. HR professionals can create a safe and inclusive space for employees to express their thoughts and engage in respectful dialogue, fostering an environment that values diversity of opinion

- **Addressing Employee Concerns:** AI implementation may generate concerns among employees regarding job security, privacy, or fairness. HR professionals can listen to these concerns, provide accurate information, and address them proactively. By facilitating dialogue, they can help employees better understand AI and alleviate fears or misconceptions
- **Promoting Transparency and Trust:** Open and transparent communication about AI initiatives builds trust between employees and the organisation. HR professionals can foster a culture of transparency by sharing information about the purpose, benefits, and limitations of AI systems, addressing questions, and keeping employees informed throughout the process
- **Mitigating Resistance to Change:** Change, especially technological change, can be met with resistance. HR professionals can help employees embrace AI by creating awareness, explaining its potential benefits, and providing training and support for any necessary upskilling or reskilling.

By facilitating discussions, HR professionals can address concerns, provide clarity, and increase acceptance of AI initiatives

- **Ethical Decision-Making:** AI raises ethical considerations around privacy, bias, and fairness. HR professionals can guide conversations on ethical frameworks and decision-making processes when implementing AI systems. By involving employees in these discussions, HR professionals can ensure that diverse perspectives are considered and ethical implications are thoroughly examined
- **Employee Engagement and Well-Being:** Engaging employees in conversations about AI shows that their opinions and concerns are valued. It promotes a sense of involvement and empowerment, which contributes to employee well-being and satisfaction. HR professionals can facilitate these discussions to create a sense of ownership and involvement among employees
- **Collaboration and Learning:** Open dialogue on AI encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees. HR professionals can facilitate cross-functional discussions where employees from various departments and roles can share insights and learn from each other's experiences. This collaboration can lead to innovative ideas and solutions.

By facilitating civil discourse and conversation about AI and ML, HR professionals create a culture of open communication, trust, and collaboration. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to successful AI integration and a positive employee experience.

Recognising the urgent need for far more open dialogue and understanding, Milan Kordestani, famed Gen S author of the new, number one best-selling book “I’m Just Saying: A Guide to Maintaining Civil Discourse in an Increasingly Divided World”, provides the below insights to serve as a de facto roadmap for engaging in productive conversations about present and future implications of AI and ML.

“The conversation surrounding AI is fuelled by two extreme and polarised viewpoints”, explains Kordestani. “On one side, there are those who harbour deep-rooted fears, reminiscent of dystopian sci-fi movies, wherein AI spells the demise of humanity. These individuals see AI as Skynet (of Terminator movie fame) come to life. This as an uncontrollable force that will override human control and wreak havoc on society. On the other side of the spectrum, there are proponents of unregulated AI development, who argue for unbridled advancement without consideration for potential job loss, ethical concerns, and socio-economic implications. This clash of ideologies creates an environment rife with hostility and ideological impasses”.

“The stakes are undeniably high when it comes to AI”, underscores Kordestani. “The fear-driven perspective believes that the very survival of humanity hangs in the balance, while the unregulated development camp emphasises the limitless possibilities and potential for progress. Such deeply entrenched positions make it difficult to find common ground, and discussions often dissolve into heated exchanges and stubborn resistance to opposing viewpoints. Moreover, the rapid pace of AI advancements and the complex nature of its implications exacerbate the challenges, leaving little time for informed discourse and reflection”.

To combat this, Kordestani believes that having civil conversations about AI is crucial because the stakes are high and the impact of this technology on society at large is profound. The above strategies offer an easy-to-undertake, though much-needed roadmap for engaging in productive and respectful dialogue. By acknowledging fears, bridging gaps, educating, fostering collaboration, considering ethical implications, and encouraging long-term thinking, individuals can navigate the minefield of AI discussions with nuance and open-mindedness.

Kordestani’s strategies provided below, singularly and in combination, are intended to foster more civil discourse amidst the high-stakes nature of AI’s impact on society. Here’s how he suggests we can communicate more effectively and productively on the topic.

- 1. Consider Ethical Implications:** Engage in discussions around the ethical dimensions of AI, such as data privacy, bias, and accountability. Encourage thoughtful examination of potential risks and safeguards to ensure responsible AI development.
- 2. Reflect on Your Own Position:** Think about your own position within discussions about AI and reflect on your biases. Honestly evaluate your views, and determine if biases or intent are skewing your perspectives. Listen to your own tone and language to ensure you are being respectful.
- 3. Listen Actively:** Acknowledge people’s fears and concerns genuinely. Actively listen to their questions, doubts, and criticisms. Create a safe space where they feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions.
- 4. Empathise:** Understand that fears and concerns about AI often stem from misinformation or a lack of understanding. Put yourself in their shoes and show empathy for their worries. Avoid dismissing or trivialising their concerns.
- 5. Provide Accurate Information:** Offer clear, concise, and accurate explanations about AI. Avoid technical jargon and use simple language to ensure everyone can understand. Provide examples and real-life applications to illustrate how AI can be beneficial.
- 6. Discuss Current Regulations:** Talk about existing regulations and policies in place to ensure the ethical and responsible use of AI. Explain how governments, organisations, and researchers are working together to address concerns and develop frameworks for AI governance.
- 7. Educate and Inform:** Counter misinformation and misunderstandings about AI by providing accurate information and insights. Share real-world examples of how AI is already improving lives and address concerns regarding job displacement, ethics, and transparency.
- 8. Address Potential Risks:** Acknowledge the potential risks and challenges associated with AI, such as job displacement, ethical concerns, and privacy issues. Discuss ongoing research and initiatives aimed at mitigating these risks. Highlight the importance of responsible AI development.
- 9. Showcase Benefits and Opportunities:** While addressing fears and concerns, also emphasise the positive aspects of AI. Talk about the potential benefits, such as improved healthcare, enhanced productivity, and personalised experiences. Highlight how AI can augment human capabilities rather than replace them.
- 10. Acknowledge Fears and Concerns:** Start by validating the fears and concerns of those who envision a dystopian AI future. By acknowledging their perspective, a foundation for constructive dialogue can be established.
- 11. Encourage Long-Term Thinking:** Shift the conversation from immediate fears to long-term perspectives. Explore the potential for AI to amplify human abilities, solve complex problems, and enhance various aspects of daily life.
- 12. Bridge the Gap:** Emphasise the need for open-mindedness and the exploration of shared values. Look for common ground, such as the desire to ensure ethical AI development or the pursuit of technologies that benefit society as a whole.
- 13. Involve Diverse Perspectives:** Ensure that discussions about AI involve diverse voices and perspectives. Include experts from various fields, policymakers, ethicists, and individuals directly impacted by AI to provide a well-rounded understanding of the topic.
- 14. Be Transparent:** Maintain transparency about AI development, deployment, and decision-making processes. Discuss data handling practices, algorithmic biases, and any potential risks openly. Transparency fosters trust and helps address concerns about AI’s impact on society.
- 15. Foster Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between technology experts, policymakers, ethicists, and other stakeholders to collectively shape AI’s trajectory. Highlight the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue and the need to find balanced solutions.

The urgency to leave behind extreme positions and embrace civil discourse is paramount. Only through respectful and informed conversations can we find common ground, address concerns, and work towards a future where AI is harnessed as a tool that benefits humanity. By following Kordestani’s guidance and approaching AI discussions with empathy, knowledge and a genuine desire to understand different perspectives, we can collectively shape the trajectory of AI in a responsible and inclusive manner.

In this era of rapid technological advancements, the need for civil conversations about AI cannot be overstated. Let us rise above the heated battles and engage in meaningful exchanges that pave the way for a future where AI is accurately represented and understood - even amid differing positions about its cultural value.



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