ISSUE 02
OCTOBER 2026

UNDERSTAND THE WORK FIRST

Where does the truth live?

The month I kept finding two versions of every organisation – the official one, and the one where the work actually gets done.

246
subscribers since the first issue on 2 October

17
pieces published in October

3
parts to a new series: Where the Truth Lives

1
question behind all of them

P2–3
From me & the Budget
Two versions of every organisation – and the work behind the cuts

P4–6
Where the Truth Lives
The record, the shadow system and the silence

P7–10
Readiness & the work itself
Go-live, the stopwatch, the 30% and Part 4

P11–17
You said, my feed & reading
Your words, my comments, what I've read and November

Photo: Stefano Pollio / Unsplash



FROM ME

Welcome back

Thank you. When the first issue went out on 2 October I was hoping for a few dozen subscribers. By the end of that weekend there were more than a hundred, and there are now 246 of you. Several of you replied, and a few of you have told me which pieces you've passed on to colleagues. That's the part I value most.

October was busier. Seventeen pieces went out: the final part of Work Before Structure, a new three-part series called Where the Truth Lives, a handful of quick reactions in my new Reading the Room section, and an extra newsletter edition asking whether we are actually moving forward. And every weekday I kept joining other people's conversations – this month on payroll data, psychological safety, AI agents and starter jobs.

Looking back over it all, I noticed that almost everything I wrote kept circling the same question, even when I hadn't planned it that way.

> *Every organisation runs two versions of itself: the official one, and the one where the work actually gets done.*
>
> THE THREAD RUNNING THROUGH OCTOBER

The official version is the org chart, the system of record, the status report, the policy and the business case. The real version is how the work actually gets done, by whom, with which workarounds, and at what time of night. Most of the time the two are close enough that nobody notices the gap. A transformation is the moment they're forced to meet – and AI is about to make that meeting a great deal faster, because AI works on the official version. It reads the record, the policy and the job description. It doesn't know about the tracker on someone's desktop or the team finishing at two in the morning.

So this issue follows that thread – through the record, the room, the readiness report and the work itself – and, as before, lets other people's words in too.

If you're new here: I'm an interim transformation executive with more than 25 years across HR, process and technology change – outsourcing, insourcing, implementing systems, and inheriting plenty that wasn't working as intended. The habit I can't shake runs through all of it: understand the work first.

Juli

OCTOBER AT A GLANCE

1. If You Can't Manage Someone Remotely…
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17. We Put a Man on the Moon Before We Put Wheels on a Suitcase



Photo: Nick Fewings / Unsplash

READING THE ROOM · THE BUDGET, 28 OCTOBER

The Budget Line Is Easy to Cut. The Work Isn't.

The Chancellor's Autumn Budget landed on Wednesday 28 October. In the weeks before it, the pattern was already there. Royal Mail plans 2,500 job cuts in head office and support functions. Flutter is cutting up to 1,400 UK and Ireland roles, pointing at last year's gambling tax rise. The BBC expects up to 2,000 jobs to go over two years.

What struck me is this. One tracker of UK announcements of 100 or more job cuts counts more than 111,000 roles since January 2025 – and employers themselves link just 2.6% of them to AI or automation. The headlines say AI. The spreadsheets say cost.

So what did the Budget actually say about work? For employers, less than many hoped and less than some feared. There was no change to employer National Insurance, and the National Living Wage rises 3.9% next April. The rate for 18 to 20-year-olds goes up by the same 3.9% – deliberately slower than in recent years, to make young people cheaper to hire. Alongside it came a £3,000 Youth Jobs Grant for employers taking on young unemployed people, the Jobs Guarantee extended to 22 to 24-year-olds, and £100 million so that every mayor in England can run a local apprenticeship service – with nearly a million young people not in education, employment or training.

Much of that is welcome. But a cheaper hourly rate doesn't create a starter job – the work does. If the routine work people learn on has already gone in the last cost plan or the last automation business case, there is nothing for a grant to fund. The same goes for the promised £600 million of back-office savings from a digital overhaul of government: a saving is booked when the role goes, not when someone has decided what happens to the work.

Earlier in my career, any capacity a change released had a named budget manager who had to account for it. Whatever the Budget says, that's the discipline I'd want back: for every role you take out, can you say what happens to the work – who does it, what stops, and what it will cost if you've got it wrong?

111,000+
UK roles in announcements of 100+ job cuts since January 2025
British Resilience Index tracker

2.6%
of those roles linked by employers themselves to AI or automation
British Resilience Index tracker

~1m
young people not in education, employment or training
Budget 2026

> *A cost cut removes the salary. It doesn't remove the work.*

RELATED: BEFORE YOU DELETE THE ROLE · READ THE FULL PIECE



Photo: Norbert Braun / Unsplash

WHERE THE TRUTH LIVES · PART 1 OF 3 · 8 OCTOBER

The Governance Gap

The new series started with the most basic question an organisation should be able to answer.

Imagine Core HR says the organisation employs 20,000 people, and payroll pays 20,017. Many of us don't need to imagine it – we've seen it. Which number is true?

Sending data successfully from one system to another proves that the integration worked. It doesn't prove that the two populations remain aligned – and that distinction matters.

I learned this early in my systems, operational and transformation career. We had implemented a global ERP that fed payroll in our jurisdiction, but there was no closed loop back. I worked hard to build one against a lot of resistance, and early on the reconciliation turned up a ghost employee who had been on the books for around two years. It wasn't someone who had been due to start and never arrived; it was fraud, and it ended up in the hands of the police. It's the only time in my career I've seen that, and I truly believe it's rare – but it's exactly what an unreconciled system allows.

The question "How many people do we employ?" should be one of the easiest for a large organisation to answer. Surprisingly often, it isn't.

20,000
people in Core HR
the governed record

20,017
people paid by payroll
which number is true?

~2 years
a ghost employee stayed on the books
found by the first reconciliation

> *Governance isn't about declaring where the truth lives. It's about continually proving that what we believe to be true still matches reality.*

THE GOVERNANCE GAP · READ THE FULL PIECE



WHERE THE TRUTH LIVES

WHERE THE TRUTH LIVES · PART 2 OF 3 · 20 OCTOBER

The Shadow System – and How to Avoid It

Every organisation has one. Sometimes it's a spreadsheet called something like "Onboarding Tracker FINAL v7". Sometimes it's a database a payroll administrator built years ago that nobody else quite understands. Nobody designed it, it isn't on the architecture diagram and it certainly isn't in the business case. But it is very often the thing people actually trust.

Shadow systems are rarely acts of rebellion; they are acts of survival. I have watched exactly this happen on a large ERP implementation. The design was sound on paper, the intent was right and the sponsorship was strong. But the system didn't reflect how work really flowed on the ground, and teams quietly built alternatives around it. The moment that happened, the new platform stopped being trusted, and once trust goes it is very hard to win back.

The first step is a change of mindset: treat every shadow system as a requirement you missed. That spreadsheet is free, detailed user research. Before asking "how do we stop this?", ask "what is this doing that our system doesn't?"

> *If raising a new starter in the official system takes twenty minutes and three approvals, and the spreadsheet takes two, you know which will win on a busy Friday.*

THE SHADOW SYSTEM – AND HOW TO AVOID IT · READ THE FULL PIECE

IN THIS SERIES · WHERE THE TRUTH LIVES

Part 1 – The Governance Gap (8 Oct) · Part 2 – The Shadow System (20 Oct) · Part 3 – Silence Isn't Agreement (26 Oct)

WHERE THE TRUTH LIVES · PART 3 OF 3 · 26 OCTOBER

Silence Isn't Agreement

"Nobody raised any concerns." It is one of the most reassuring things a programme team can hear at the end of a design workshop. In some parts of the world it is also one of the least reliable.

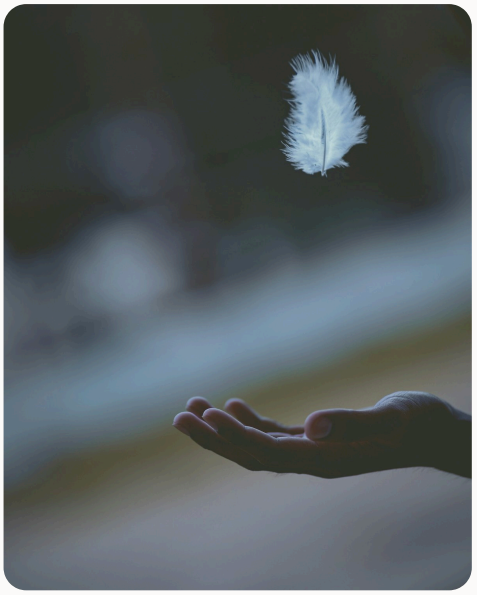


Photo: Javardh / Unsplash

In my experience of Western organisations, and the UK in particular, people simply won't follow a process they think is stupid or wrong. They'll tell you, often bluntly and often in the first workshop. One of our first workshops, in Tilburg in the Netherlands, was also one of the most challenging. They didn't want the new system. They already had one that worked, so why should they engage? And they had a point. But at no point was I in any doubt about where I stood.

In more hierarchical cultures, the process is presented, heads nod, nobody challenges it in the room – and then the work gets done the way that actually works: quietly, alongside the official route.

I met a version of it when I worked in Asia. Three months in, I noticed that the payroll team beat their KPIs every single month, so I had the normal conversation with the "mother ship" in Edinburgh: if targets are beaten every month, they are clearly too easy and need tightening. It then took me about a month to persuade the leadership of what I had since discovered was true. The KPIs were genuinely tough. They were met every month because the team stayed until one, two or three in the morning. Nobody had told me the targets were unrealistic.

The evidence, briefly:

35

the UK and Germany's score on Hofstede's power distance index – how far people accept the boss isn't to be challenged

the Netherlands scores 38

81–100

Mexico 81, the Philippines 94, Malaysia around 100

Hofstede Insights

Quieter

employees with higher power distance values were less likely to voice concerns or suggestions

Botero & Van Dyne, 2009

> *Either way, the workaround is coming. The question is whether you've designed your programme to hear it.*

SILENCE ISN'T AGREEMENT · READ THE FULL PIECE



READINESS

Photo: Alex Jones / Unsplash

ASSURANCE · 15 OCTOBER

Ready to Go Live Isn't the Same as Ready

There's a question that gets asked in almost every go/no-go meeting I've sat in. "Is the system ready?" It's a fair question. It's also only a fraction of the right one.

By the time an HR system reaches go-live, the technology is usually the best-understood part of the programme. What's far less understood is whether payroll can pay everyone correctly on the first live run, whether Finance's numbers will still reconcile at month-end, whether managers know what they're now expected to do themselves – and whether anyone has actually asked them.

That gap is why I've rebuilt my HR system implementation health check. Every measure is rated twice – progress and risk – and everything is rated on evidence. No reconciliation, no test exit report, no training data, no survey result – no green. Reassurance isn't evidence.

A few of the questions it asks:

- *Can you show me the reconciliation from your last payroll parallel run – with every variance explained?*
- *If someone can be added to payroll without going through the HR process, how would you know?*
- *Who agreed the go/no-go criteria – and was it before the go/no-go meeting?*

None of these are trick questions. But it's surprising how often they don't have a ready answer. I learnt that from one of the best project managers I've worked with. She was brutal: if you told her something was done, she'd ask whether it was "done, done and done" – carried out, documented and proven. It was hard and uncomfortable at times, but it worked.

> *The real question isn't whether your system is ready to go live. It's whether your organisation is ready to live with it.*

READY TO GO LIVE ISN'T THE SAME AS READY · READ THE FULL PIECE

FROM THE HEALTH CHECK

Would people tell you – or work around it?

One of the questions in my rebuilt HR system implementation health check doesn't look at the system at all: would people on your programme tell you about a problem, or quietly work around it?

It's there because of what October's pieces kept coming back to. Shadow systems, workshops where nobody raised a concern, KPIs met by a team working until two in the morning. In every case the information existed somewhere; it just never reached the people making the decisions. Experience has taught me that a quiet programme isn't the same as a healthy one.

So the health check doesn't ask whether there's a communications plan. It asks for evidence: how many issues were raised early compared with how many were found late in testing or after go-live, and what happened to the last person who brought unwelcome news.

I'm not publishing the full tool, but I'll be sharing more of it in the new year. If you know someone heading for a go-live in 2027, this might be worth passing on.

WORKFORCE PLANNING & CAPACITY · 13 OCTOBER

Maybe We Need to Bring Back the Stopwatch

My father-in-law was a time and motion study man at one point in his career. More than 50 years ago, he would literally observe work being done: what was the process, how long did each stage take, how many times was it done, where were the delays – and ultimately, how much resource did you need to do it?

We might think the stopwatch sounds rather dated now. I'm increasingly wondering whether we should bring it back.

In HR, Finance and other corporate functions, we can usually tell you our headcount and what it costs. But ask how many transactions they actually process, how long each takes, what percentage are exceptions and, crucially, why those exceptions exist – and the answer can be surprisingly hard to find.

I'm increasingly concerned that organisations are jumping from "We have 30 people doing this" straight to "How much of it can AI do?" There is a rather important bit missing in the middle: what exactly are those 30 people doing?



Photo: Veri Ivanova / Unsplash

> *We know how many people we have. Do we know how much work we have?*
>
> MAYBE WE NEED TO BRING BACK THE STOPWATCH · READ THE FULL PIECE



THE WORK ITSELF

Photo: Gilles Roux / Unsplash

AUTOMATION & AI · 5 OCTOBER

The 30% Rehire Problem

Whenever someone tells me a workforce decision "isn't about the money," I have a stock reply. As always, "it's never about the money… until it's about the money." Gartner has just given that line a number.

On one Sunday morning Claude told me I'd used 99% of my usage for the week. That was probably a welcome stop … but it points out that while AI can work 24/7, which everyone is excited about, particularly CFOs, it does cost, and it costs for every transaction we use it for.

30%

of employees laid off due to replacement by AI will need to be rehired by 2029 – often at a significantly higher cost

Gartner, Sep 2026

76%

of CEOs expect AI to have the biggest impact on their industry within three years

Gartner

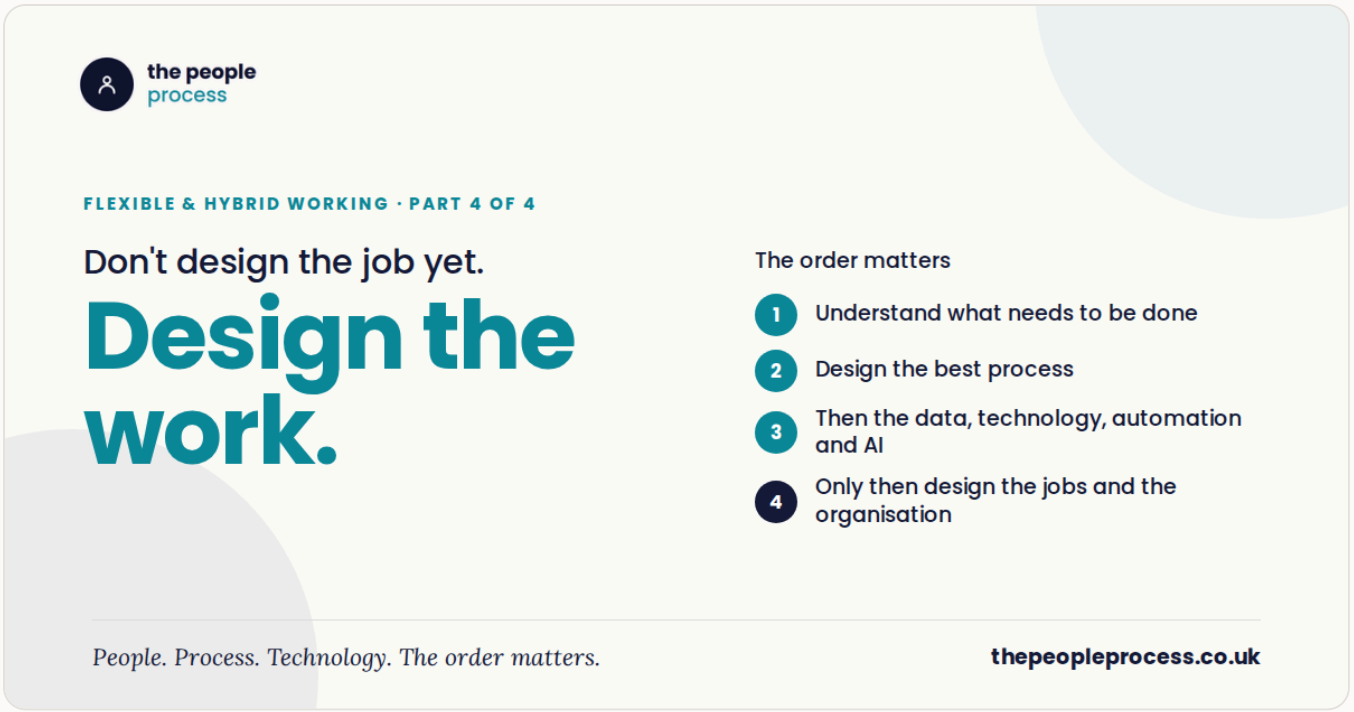
$740bn

Big Tech capital expenditure committed for 2026, up 69% on 2025

Axios, Apr 2026

> *You can measure a salary. You can't measure work you never actually mapped.*

THE 30% REHIRE PROBLEM · READ THE FULL PIECE



WORK BEFORE STRUCTURE · PART 4 OF 4 · 6 OCTOBER

Don’t Design the Job Yet. Design the Work.

More times than I can count in my career, I’ve been handed an org chart to redesign, or a headcount number to hit, before anyone could actually tell me what the work was. My first question is always the same: what are we actually trying to get done here?

In the early 2000s, I was leading a team in a remote advisory centre. Each team was resourced per capita – by the number of employees it supported. But we had call-handling data: the number of issues, the number of calls per issue and the length of those calls. It told a very different story. It got my team the right resourcing – and it stopped them joking that I’d have them catheterised to keep the KPIs up. There was definitely feedback in that joke.

If we start with the existing org chart, we unconsciously preserve the existing organisation. We take today’s jobs and ask how AI can make them faster. We take today’s team and ask how many people we need. We take today’s office and ask how many days people should attend.

> *People. Process. Technology. The order matters.*
>
> DON’T DESIGN THE JOB YET. DESIGN THE WORK. · READ THE FULL PIECE

RECOMMENDED READING

Sergio Caredda picked this piece in his newsletter The Intentional Organisation (Issue #61, 16 October), calling it “the order of operations this issue argues for”. Thank you, Sergio. That completes Work Before Structure. Parts 1 and 2 were in Issue 1, and Part 3 is in the round-up below.

YOU SAID

“Which parts of a job will it replace?”

October’s posts drew fewer comments than Three Days in the Office – much of this month’s conversation happened on other people’s posts, which is where “From my feed” comes in. But the comments that did come in were thoughtful ones.

Peter Francis
Head of People and Organisational Development

“Do you think we sometimes get too caught up in the question of whether AI will replace jobs, when perhaps the more useful question is which parts of a job it will replace? … Perhaps the real challenge for organisations is deciding what we want people to do with that extra capacity before the technology decides it for us.”

JULI REPLIED

“Which jobs?” is the easy question. “Which parts, and what do we want people doing instead?” is the hard one. In my experience released capacity rarely turns into value by accident. Someone has to decide what that time is for and then invest in it.

ON: VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR

Ryan Keeler
LinkedIn Ghostwriter & Positioning Strategist

“It’s important that you know what work needs to be done, because if all you have is a role defined but no work within it, then it’s pretty pointless.”

JULI REPLIED

A role is just a container, and if we design it before we understand the work, we end up filling it with whatever is lying around. The work tells you the skills, the volumes and where the judgement sits. Only then do you know what shape the role should be.

ON: DON’T DESIGN THE JOB YET

Sergio Caredda
CHRO · The Intentional Organisation

“That would imply understanding work. Not necessarily the most common experience for too many. We are so focused on building tasks and jobs that we too often don’t reflect on the underpinning work.”

ON: DON’T DESIGN THE JOB YET

Bobby Chatterjee FCIPD
Leadership · Learning · Transformation · Coaching

“I like your take on this Juli. I also say please to AI and don’t want to delete that from my regular way of communicating.”

DOROTHY BENNETT ADDED

“Same for me too.”

ON: DO GOOD MANNERS STILL COST NOTHING?

AND ONE MORE · ON: SILENCE ISN’T AGREEMENT

“*Great series of articles Juli. This one really resonated.*”

Donald Reid · Non Executive Board Director / Vice Chair NHS Lanarkshire



Photo: Luke Lowraszuk / Unsplash

READING THE ROOM · 2 OCTOBER

Video Killed the Radio Star. AI Is Coming for the Job Description.

If video really did kill the radio star, what crime did podcasts commit? Video didn't actually kill radio. Radio adapted. Technology didn't simply replace what came before. It unbundled it.

My son recently moved to Vancouver, and we had round after round of parties with his fabulous friends. A week or so later, copies of their film photos started arriving, and they certainly do have a quality of an age about them. That generation hasn't rejected digital. They've discovered there was something valuable in the experience we took out when we made photography faster, easier and more efficient. There are lots of circles in life, and I feel like I'm living in one.

A job isn't one thing. It's a collection of tasks, decisions, relationships, knowledge and judgement. Often it's also years of experience that nobody has ever actually written down. It's rarely the job description, which tends to be the version someone wrote for the recruitment advert and never looked at again.

> *AI might not kill the job. But it could completely rewrite the job description. The trick is knowing what we want to keep before we start rewriting it.*

VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR · READ THE FULL PIECE

READING THE ROOM · 7 OCTOBER

Do Good Manners Still Cost Nothing?

A TikTok comment section, a one-word reply – "Rude" – and Sam Altman saying people's pleases and thank yous cost OpenAI "tens of millions of dollars well spent". It left me wondering whether AI is quietly teaching us to talk in commands.

> *It isn't only about how we're training AI, but about how AI is training us.*

DO GOOD MANNERS STILL COST NOTHING? · READ THE FULL PIECE

MORE FROM OCTOBER

In case you missed them

1 OCT · WORK BEFORE STRUCTURE · PART 3

If You Can't Manage Someone Remotely, Is Remote Working Really the Problem?

"Those things are management. Proximity isn't."

Read it →

7 OCT · AI & THE FUTURE OF WORK

Start With Why. Especially Now AI Can Do the What.

"AI may take some of the tasks you do today. It can't take the reason you're good at them, or the reason people come to you."

Read it →

12 OCT · READING THE ROOM

Computer Says No? Fifty Years of Recruitment Technology

"Has fifty years of recruitment technology made hiring better – or just made it easier to say no at scale?"

Read it →

14 OCT · READING THE ROOM

"Because We Said So" Won't Be a Reason Much Longer

"If your attendance policy had to pass a 'reasonable, evidenced and explained' test tomorrow, would it?"

Read it →

19 OCT · NEWSLETTER EDITION

Read the Room: Are we actually moving forward?

"Finance systems are like a kit house: you choose the paint and the carpets. HR systems come with the plumbing and wiring in, but you can move the internal walls, change what every room is for and redraw the floor plan."

Read it →

22 OCT · HR TECHNOLOGY & VALUE

Are We Finally Getting Better at HR Technology ROI?

"Only 14% of organisations say their HR technology is coherent and interoperable. Enter once. Serve all needs."

Read it →

29 OCT · AUTOMATION & AI

The Automation Business Case Starts With the Work, Not the Technology

"Before the next automation business case reaches your board: can you read it right to left?"

Read it →

30 OCT · NEWSLETTER EDITION

We Put a Man on the Moon Before We Put Wheels on a Suitcase

"The object is the easy part. The system around it is the transformation."

Read it →

FROM MY FEED

Six conversations that sharpened my thinking

Every weekday I try to add something to someone else's conversation. These were the October posts I kept coming back to – with what I added underneath.

MM

Megumi Miki
Author · Quietly Powerful | Leaders Who Listen

Megumi asked whether we're oversimplifying psychological safety, "because safety is experienced by people and people don't all experience the same environment in the same way."

I ADDED

Your "patterns" factor is the one I see most from programme boards. The first person who reports amber and gets a grilling teaches the whole room what speaking up costs, and the next few reports come in green. I've sat in those meetings and, early on, not always challenged it when I should have.

Megumi's article →

ND

Nenad Djordjevic
Managing Partner, Qunetric

"A data warehouse doesn't create a single source of truth. Governance does." A centralised warehouse gives you one place to look – it doesn't give you one answer.

I ADDED

That's exactly the HR and payroll story too. When the authoritative definition isn't owned, people don't wait – they build their own version in a spreadsheet, and within a year that becomes the number the board sees. I've inherited a few of those, and the hardest part was never the data; it was agreeing whose definition counted.

Nenad's post →

CF

Claire Fitzgerald
Founder, HRnetics

Claire's poll: should AI be used in a redundancy situation at all? Her line – a person owns the evidence and the decision.

I ADDED

I'd put stress-testing the business case at the top. In my experience that's where redundancy goes wrong most often: roles are selected from the org chart before anyone understands the work they hold.

CLAIRE REPLIED

"I've seen restructures where the focus has been on the org chart rather than how the work is going to get done afterwards."

Claire's poll →

FA

Francesco Antonucci
Partner, BDO Advisory

Tool or teammate? A study cited in HBR found that managers who treat AI as an employee catch 18% fewer errors.

I ADDED

I'd definitely vote tool – and the 18% figure shows why that matters. In my automation work, the controls that held had a named role or person who owned the decision and the exceptions – and where there wasn't one, we paid for it. Put simply: humans experience life; AI processes information about it.

Francesco's post →

AD

Amitava Deb
CTO / CPTO · AI agents in production

Every AI agent needs one named owner – the business manager responsible for the work it does. "An agent without an owner is not an asset. It is a liability with a login."

I ADDED

Naming an owner is the easy part; it only becomes real when those duties are written into that manager's own role, objectives and time. We've named owners on registers before – for processes, data, benefits – and where nobody gave them the hours, the name stayed and the ownership didn't.

Amitava's article →

BH

Ben Harrison
Director, The Work Foundation

Unemployment may have fallen to 4.7%, but vacancies are at their lowest outside the pandemic since 2014 – a tough market, particularly for young people.

I ADDED

The figure that stays with me is starter-job adverts falling from 139,000 a week to 71,000 in a decade. Employers are quietly designing them out: when automation business cases remove the routine work people learn on, the first rung goes with it.

Ben's post →

FROM MY FEED · CONTINUED

And a few more I joined in on

Akeel Munshi · Transformation Confidence Index
Can the programme prove its value?
"The evidence I'd trust most is the operating budget. If the benefit is real, the owner's budget or targets should already reflect it."

Catey Palmer FCIPP · Founder, DuraSuite
The Payslip Pressure Report 2026
"When I've traced payslip errors back, many didn't start in payroll at all – they began upstream, with a late change or a leaver nobody told payroll about."

Bill Fanning · Prompt & Circumstance
Every booth will say a human makes the final call
"In the high-volume recruitment I've been involved in, often just a few minutes – and the order of the pile did more of the deciding than we liked to admit."

Ajit Kumar Sarangi · Head of Human Resources
MAPS: redesigning one role in 90 minutes
"I'd choose the HR administrator who sits between HR and payroll – and I'd invite payroll into the room."

James Henderson · Technology Executive
Operational resilience is not waiting for the vendor
"Pay people is the one I'd test first, because payday doesn't move while you wait for a fix."

AND ONE REPOST

On a Chief AI Leader post about a five-tool AI stack, I added: "More subscriptions alone will not improve the workflow" should be pinned above every AI budget request. As always it's never about the money… until it's about the money. Count the time spent checking and fixing the output before you claim the time saved.

FROM MY INBOX

What I've been reading

Four pieces from my inbox this month that make the same argument from different directions – with what I took from each.

SERGIO CAREDDA · THE INTENTIONAL ORGANISATION #61 · 16 OCT

The Task Fallacy

Work is a system, not a list of tasks – and we have known it since Trist and Bamforth's coal-mine study in 1951. Task lists are fine for forecasting a whole economy, but inside an organisation they miss what each task carries, the weak links further down the chain and the gap between work as prescribed and work as done.

MY TAKE

It's the shared-services lesson again: the work left behind in a lift-and-shift is the work nobody mapped.

Read it →

KENNEDYFITCH · FROM HYPE TO IMPACT

68% still exploring, 15% redesigning

A survey of more than 200 HR professionals found that 68% place their organisation at the awareness or exploration stage of AI, and only 15% report any deeper redesign of processes, decisions, workflows or roles.

MY TAKE

The 15% is the number that matters. Adoption without redesign is just the old process, faster.

DIETER VELDSMAN · AIHR LEADING HR · 14 OCT

What are you going to stop funding?

As a CHRO, Dieter took an ERP business case to his CFO and was asked: "What are you going to stop doing to pay for it?" AIHR's HR Priorities 2027 report finds most HR investment still sits in work facing growing automation pressure, while workforce planning, organisation design and analytics get a much smaller share.

MY TAKE

Every HR technology business case should come with a stop list – and a named owner for switching things off.

Read it →

DANIEL KÄFER · 20 & 27 OCT

Set the growth goal first – and don't fire the pilot

McKinsey's 2025 State of AI survey found 80% of companies set efficiency as an AI objective, but only 39% report any enterprise-level EBIT impact; the high performers were nearly three times as likely to have redesigned their workflows. A week later Käfer used chess to describe three stages – human, human amplified, machine alone – and argued that most companies are skipping the middle one. Some tasks should move fast to the machine. Others, like bad news to an employee, should not: "the content can be drafted with the suit on; the delivery is the person."

MY TAKE

That's the line I'd draw in HR too. AI can help draft the restructure; a person has to deliver it – honestly.



What's next

November opens with something new for this newsletter: a full report on trust, AI and leadership.

TUE 10 NOVEMBER · THE TRUST REPORT

Trust Arrives on Foot

What 2009 can teach us about AI and leadership in the digital world – a special edition here, the full report on my website and a free PDF to download.

LIVE NOW · POLL

What colour is your programme, honestly?

Green, amber, red – or honestly, I don't know. No names, no steering committee. I'll share what comes back in December.

Go-Live Is Not the Finish Line
12 November

Let's Talk About Data – a four-part series
From 17 November

Whose name is on this?
23 November

Who Decided What Got Cut?
1 December

ONE QUESTION TO LEAVE YOU WITH

Where does the truth live in your organisation – in the system, or in the spreadsheet next to it?

Tell me in the comments. I read every one – and the best may well make it into next month's issue.



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