

From Functional Expert to Strategic Change Partner

How HR, L&D & Talent Leaders Drive Lasting Impact in the Age of AI

Webinar Summary · 19 March 2026

Overview

This session brought together three practitioners — **James Brook** (Founder & CEO, TalentPredix™), **Jesper Helt** (Head of People, Samsara) and **Natasia Hieber** (Founder, We Are HR) — for a candid, practical conversation on what it means to lead the human side of AI transformation. Below are the key themes, insights and actions from the discussion.

<p>James Brook Founder & CEO, TalentPredix™</p> <p>Businesspsychologist, strengthspioneer & executive coach with 30 years' experience</p>	<p>Jesper Helt Head of People, Samsara</p> <p>Connectspeople strategytoexecution in high-growth tech environments</p>	<p>Natasia Hieber Founder, We Are HR</p> <p>Trainsand developsHRprofessionals; practical HR capability building</p>
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1. HR at a Crossroads — A Moment of Truth

The conversation opened with a pointed provocation: despite two decades of calls for HR to become more strategic, Gartner research cited during the session found that only **24% of HR leaders believe their current structure adequately separates transactional from strategic work**. AI makes this gap both more urgent — and more solvable.

Key points from the panel:

- The half-life of skills has collapsed — from 10+ years when many in the room entered the workforce, to 3–4 years today; for tech/digital skills, as little as 18 months.
- Most change initiatives still fail for human, not technical, reasons — unaddressed emotional and psychological dimensions undermine adoption.
- Many organisations have not yet formally prepared their people for AI: no shared conversation, no framework, no policy.
- HR risks being the function that manages AI's admin while missing its strategic opportunity.

"AI is coming at organisations like a tsunami. It is here, it is unstoppable, and it is about harnessing that energy and directing it the right way."

Jesper Helt, Samsara

"HR professionals are struggling to get the message out that AI is a tool for helping people — not replacing them."

Natasia Hieber, We Are HR

2. The Psychological Stages of AI Adoption

James introduced a four-stage model of AI adoption — a lens that HR and L&D; teams can use to plan interventions that meet people where they actually are:

Stage 1 — Exposure

Building initial awareness and understanding. Why should I care? Is it safe for me to use?

Stage 2 — Trust

Reducing fear and anxiety. Helping people see AI as an enabler, not a threat to their identity or job security.

Stage 3 — Experimentation

Creating safe space to test, pilot, share and learn. Peer learning and visible wins matter more than formal training.

Stage 4 — Integration

Embedding AI into day-to-day workflows and cultural norms — making it simply 'the way we do things here'.

Samsara's 'Fly with AI' initiative — a gamified, team-wide bingo challenge covering 25 AI experiments — was cited as a powerful example of Stage 3 in action: playful, peer-led, and highly visible. It was later scaled to sales, engineering and other functions.

3. What Strategic Action Actually Looks Like

The panel pushed beyond the aspiration to ask: what does 'being strategic' look like in behaviour tomorrow morning?

For HR teams	For the organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map where AI is already impacting your business — not where you think it will, but where it already is. • Take ownership of the human side of AI change. Position HR as the function that leads psychological readiness. • Start with fear. Ask people what part of AI worries them — before introducing tools or training. • Address the most hated admin first. Use AI to automate what drains HR's time so you can do the work that matters. • Build a shared AI use policy — what is acceptable, what is not, and how data is protected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a baseline: go out and find where the business is already experimenting with AI. • Create peer learning forums — identify your early adopters and give them a platform to share. • Role-model uncertainty. Senior leaders acknowledging their own discomfort with AI builds psychological safety. • Make experimentation part of the norm — not just an event. Reward curiosity and iteration. • Accept short planning horizons. Quarterly roadmaps are replacing annual ones in fast-moving environments.

"I would be surprised if, in 10 years from now, HR still had the same profile — the same reliance on connectivity as its primary driver. We need more critical thinking, strategy and technology fluency."

Jesper Helt, Samsara



4. The Human Skills Gap in HR — TalentPredix Data

James shared findings from a **TalentPredix analysis of 230 HR and L&D; professionals** — broadly representative of the UK HR population. The data revealed a significant gap between the strengths HR already has and the ones most needed in the AI era.

Where HR is strong	Where HR has gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding others & empathy • Relationship building & teamwork • Drive and results focus • Adaptability and self-development • Leading and coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical and strategic thinking • Persuading and influencing • Pragmatism and forward thinking • Commercial awareness and data literacy • Problem-solving confidence
<p>Top energisers: people interaction, coaching, supporting growth, creating organisational impact</p>	<p>Top drains: admin, transactional work, repetitive processes — much of which AI can now replace</p>

Implication: Skills like critical thinking, influencing and strategic thinking are not natural energisers for many HR professionals — which means they must be **intentionally** developed, not assumed. TalentPredix also measures the eight critical human skills most needed in the AI era, including emotional resilience, creative thinking, adaptability and self-mastery.

5. AI, Talent Tools and the Human Judgement Question

The panel discussed how HR and L&D; functions are already integrating AI into workflows — and where the boundaries of human judgement must remain firm.

- **Recruiting:** AI note-taking tools (e.g. BrightHire) are removing administrative burden and allowing interviewers to focus on the conversation — improving the quality of human judgement, not replacing it.
- **Performance conversations:** Samsara is exploring conversational AI 'coaching gyms' that help employees process feedback and prepare for difficult conversations — a bottom-up, self-paced approach.
- **Content and facilitation:** AI is being used for content creation and voiceover — but human facilitation and 1-to-1 conversations remain irreplaceable.
- **The 'so what' challenge:** AI can analyse data and produce charts — but HR professionals must be able to read, interpret and act on that data. The tool is only as good as the human insight applied to it.
- **Personality tools are becoming obsolete:** Knowing that 60% of an organisation is extroverted tells you very little about AI-readiness. Knowing that critical thinking scores are low gives you something to build on.

"It is not the knowledge that will matter — it is how you use it, how you apply it. HR knowledge will be democratised. What differentiates you is the quality of your judgement."

James Brook, TalentPredix™



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Your 90-Day Action Plan

- 1 Map the landscape** Find out where AI is already impacting your business — in marketing, recruiting, engineering. Don't wait for a top-down mandate.
- 2 Start with fear** Before introducing tools or training, ask your team what worries them about AI. Surface the anxiety. Address it openly.
- 3 Run a small experiment** Identify the most repetitive task your team hates most and trial an AI tool to address it. Show, don't tell.
- 4 Find your early adopters** Identify the people in your team or organisation who are already experimenting. Give them a platform and let them teach others.
- 5 Set a policy** Draft a clear, simple AI use policy — what is acceptable, what is not, and how company data is protected.
- 6 Build your own skills** Invest in your critical thinking, data literacy and commercial awareness. These are the capabilities that will define your value in the AI era.

Find out how TalentPredix™ can help your organisation build the strengths, human skills and talent insight needed to thrive in the Age of AI. Request a free trial or discovery call at talentpredix.com

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