

# Leveraging AI for Leadership Development

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**Abstract:** In a fast-paced world where technology is continuously evolving, artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming a compelling tool for numerous training and education sectors, including leadership development. However, its application also presents a unique set of challenges and limitations. This white paper explores the benefits and obstacles involved in leveraging AI for developing leaders.

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There's no doubt that AI has the power to disrupt and revolutionize how we live and work. The world is trying to figure out how to best harness that power for good, while being rightly skeptical of AI's inherent risks, limitations, and potential to put hardworking people out of jobs. Just recently, the Federal Communications Commission and the National Science Foundation held a hearing to examine the risks and benefits of using AI and to begin to build a policy platform to help regulate this space.

It's clear that the deployment of AI has the potential to transform leadership development — for both the leadership development professional designing the training and the leader participating in the training. Before we delve deeper, it's important to have a basic understanding of what AI is and how to maximize its effectiveness.



According to McKinsey, “Artificial intelligence is a machine’s ability to perform the cognitive functions we usually associate with human minds, such as perceiving, reasoning, learning, interacting with an environment, problem solving, and even exercising creativity.” While generative AI tools — namely [ChatGPT](#) — have garnered attention recently, AI exists in many forms. It has been prevalent in our lives for years in the form of voice assistants like Siri and Alexa, customer service chat bots, predictive text tools, automatic photo tagging systems, facial recognition software, and automated call systems. Strategic use of AI has been increasing efficiency and productivity in a variety of industries for decades, including communications, transportation and logistics, medicine, project management, banking and finance, and more.

## Getting the Most out of AI

When dipping a toe into the world of AI, it's important to know that most AI tools require prompts to function. The more detailed the prompt, the more specific and thorough the response from the AI. Expertise in writing effective prompts is a critical skill for harnessing everything that AI can offer. Leverage the 5Ws (who, what, where, when, and why) but also instruct the AI platform to consider the tone you'd like the response to take (corporate, casual, formal, etc.). Visualize what kind of response

you'd like and craft your prompt with as much detail as you can. Hint: You can never be too specific! For more tips on how to write effective prompts, check out [LearnPrompting.org](https://www.learnprompting.org).

Even before submitting your prompt, you can have a conversation with the AI platform so that it has as much background information about you, your organization, your environment, your challenge, and your target audience as possible. You can even flip the script and instruct the AI tool to ask you questions so that it gets smarter. Ask it what information it needs from you to be successful.

## AI Benefits for Leaders

**Data-Driven Decision Making:** Leaders often rely on their intuition and experience when making decisions. AI can supplement this by providing valuable data insights, enabling leaders to make more informed, objective decisions. AI can process vast amounts of data to identify market trends, consumer preferences, and potential business opportunities. AI-powered analytics can assist leaders in assessing potential risks associated with business decisions and strategies.

**Efficient Communication:** AI can help streamline communication and assist in analyzing tones, sentiments, and patterns. AI tools like [PolitePost.net](https://www.politepost.net) can help leaders craft more empathetic and professional emails if they are prone to sending emails that could be perceived as too curt or direct.

**Mentorship and Coaching:** AI-driven mentorship or coaching apps can offer continuous, 24/7 support and learning to emerging leaders. These intelligent chatbots, powered by natural language processing



and machine learning, can answer leaders' questions, offer personalized advice, and provide instant feedback. This interactive and immersive approach allows leaders to learn from their experiences, experiment with different strategies, and adjust real-time, ultimately accelerating their growth and development. Tools like [Hey Pi](https://www.hey.com) can be invaluable when leaders need a quick pep talk, brainstorming session, or advice.

**Performance Evaluation:** AI can help evaluate employee performance objectively, considering various data points, leading to fairer performance reviews.

**Outsource Routine Tasks:** Leaders can immediately free up time on their busy calendars by turning to AI tools to help organize their to-do lists ([Notion AI](https://www.notion.com)), remind them to follow-up on important items ([FollowUpThen](https://www.followupthen.com)), and even take meeting notes ([Supernormal](https://www.supernormal.com)).

## AI Benefits for Leadership Development Teams

**Endless Resources:** AI-enabled tools like [ChatGPT](#) are adept at scouring the internet for specific content and helpfully summarizing the results. In mere seconds, these tools can quickly help an L&D professional identify powerful learning resources on specific leadership skills, including articles, interviews, books, and inspirational quotes, and create summaries and focused guidance based on these resources.

**Creative Partner:** Leadership development can leverage AI just like they would a creative and collaborative team member. AI platforms can help overcome writer's block, generate new ideas, and conduct research. And, if a particular course relies on a particular leadership text or framework, AI can even help craft relevant activities or other program content (think microlearning content or eLearning storyboards) that aligns with those key learnings. Check out [this exchange with ChatGPT](#) where it provided two activities (one reflective and one hands-on) based on Brené Brown's book *Dare to Lead*. The results are powerful and serve as a great jumping off point. From here, a developer could quickly tailor the suggestions to match their target audience and learning objectives.

**Personalized Learning Experiences:** Today, AI can be a helpful resource for L&D professionals as they craft customized scenarios and skills practice exercises for specific audiences. AI can enable an L&D professional to quickly create or tweak leadership development content for each audience's unique needs.

**Content Curation:** Once an organization has fully embraced AI, it will be possible for machine learning algorithms to recommend learning resources, such as articles, videos, and case studies, based on a leader's specific development areas. This personalized approach can ensure that leaders receive the most relevant and impactful content, leading to faster skill acquisition and application.

**Customized Coaching:** Likewise, by analyzing leaders' communication styles, AI can provide customized coaching tips to enhance their interactions with team members.

**Participant Feedback Analysis:** AI can assist in objectively analyzing participant survey data and identify patterns and make recommendations for improvement. This can be particularly useful with open ended responses, as AI technology can assign positive, negative, or neutral rankings quickly.

**Content Analysis:** Likewise, AI platforms can quickly evaluate program content for inclusive language, idioms that might not play with a global audience, gender-neutral pronouns, and much more.

**Powerful Simulations:** AI can help leadership development teams create realistic scenarios for leaders to practice decision-making, conflict resolution, and crisis management in a safe virtual environment.

**Talent Identification:** AI algorithms can analyze employee data and performance metrics to identify potential future leaders within an organization, aiding succession planning efforts.

**Scalability:** Traditional leadership development methods are often time-consuming and costly, particularly when scaling to large organizations. With AI, training can be scaled across an organization efficiently and economically, reaching more leaders and promoting a leadership-oriented culture.

## Obstacles in Leveraging AI for Leadership Development

**Misinformation:** Right now, AI platforms themselves are quick to point out that responses might contain false or misleading information. In short, AI is only as good as its source material and regulating misinformation online is a constant challenge. To combat this obstacle, anyone using AI platforms should take the responses with a grain of salt and conduct additional research using credible sources.

**Data Privacy Concerns:** AI systems rely on data. Concerns about the confidentiality and security of personal information can create barriers to acceptance. Compliance with data protection laws and maintaining user trust are crucial. Leaders should not share any sensitive information when leveraging AI platforms. Organizations should update their IT policies to incorporate AI usage guidelines.

**Lack of Personal Touch:** AI cannot entirely replace the need for humanity in leadership development. Emotional intelligence, empathy, and interpersonal relationships are key components of leadership that AI systems cannot fully replicate. When leveraging any information from an AI tool, leaders should be sure to edit it to reflect their own personal style and ensure it reflects their organization's unique culture.

“Despite all the hype and excitement about AI, it's still extremely limited today relative to what human intelligence is.”

— Andrew Ng, British-American computer scientist and technology entrepreneur

**Technological Infrastructure:** The implementation of AI necessitates a robust technological infrastructure, including software, hardware, and technical expertise.

**Organizational Disconnect:** Unless developed internally, AI platforms aren't able to offer leadership development tips and best practices that align directly with an organization's leadership

competencies or models. Yet. For now, leaders will have to take AI-generated advice with a grain of salt and conduct due diligence to ensure they are adhering to their organization's leadership values and practices.

**Adaptability and Flexibility:** AI systems follow pre-defined algorithms and might lack the flexibility to adapt to unexpected situations. This could limit the effectiveness of AI in developing leaders who must deal with dynamic and unpredictable scenarios.

**AI Bias:** AI systems can inadvertently reinforce existing biases in their training data, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes. Efforts must be taken to ensure AI models used for leadership development are as unbiased and fair as possible.

## Responding to Prompts Versus Developing

One of the challenges facing leadership development practitioners is separating what CAN be done with AI from what SHOULD be done with AI. As previously mentioned, generative AI responds to prompts, the better the prompt, the better the response. However, people — including leaders — don't know what they don't know — they don't know what to ask — and will need to continue to rely on others for guidance in acquiring the skills necessary for effective leadership.

For example, if a leader is preparing for a difficult performance conversation with an employee, ChatGPT can provide a set of very credible recommendations for having that conversation; if pointed at the company's HR policies, the recommendations will even follow the organization's policies and guidelines. At the same time, a well-trained and skilled leader may have been able to prevent the need for this difficult conversation in the first place. Leadership development practitioners will still need to map out the development path of critical skills for its leaders.

AI will undoubtedly support leaders in decision-making, strategy, and other data-driven activities. However, this support may actually heighten the critical role of leadership development in increasing the leaders' capabilities in building relationships, connecting, providing actionable and powerful feedback, and developing their employees in meaningful ways.

## Final Thoughts

Incorporating AI in leadership development is undoubtedly an exciting prospect that could greatly increase productivity for leadership development professionals and improve the experience for leaders everywhere. However, before AI is adopted into the mainstream, it will be imperative that the AI systems in question be further refined to respect privacy, provide security, demonstrate flexibility, and minimize bias. And, leaders and L&D professionals alike must remember that, AI isn't a magic bullet. It can; however, help increase productivity, creativity, and efficiency — and it can serve as a virtual playground where leaders can practice new skills, gain real-time feedback, and formulate key strategies.

In the coming years, we can expect to see further advancements in AI technology that could enhance its role in leadership development. This is merely the start of the discussion on this topic, as the world continues to grapple with how to best leverage AI, while safeguarding privacy and valuing humanity.

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## About Entelechy

Entelechy partners with leading global organizations to design and deliver leadership development programs that drive permanent change and bottom-line benefits. Entelechy's flagship leadership development programs, *Aspiring Leaders*, *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*, and *Leading Leaders*, transform leaders as they progress through their careers. To learn more about Entelechy, please visit [unlockit.com](https://unlockit.com) or connect on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/entelechy).