AI and Us: The Conversations About AI That We Are Not Having (Enough)

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce

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Everywhere you look, someone is talking about AI — it's in the headlines, boardrooms and even our homes — helping us plan holidays and weekly meals.

But for all the noise about productivity gains, disruption, AI governance and the latest prompts, there is one conversation we are still not having enough: what AI means for people.

And why is that important? Because we need focus on people to ensure people WANT to use the tools and benefit from all the great things AI can do.

I had the pleasure of speaking on this topic at the "sold out" ACC Australia Legal Technology and Innovation Community (LTIC) "Geek Out" session in October 2025. While there are many people issues I could have tackled, I focused on looking at AI through the human lens in relation to:

• Reframing our approach to AI — so we become active participants in shaping the future
• Creating psychological safety — for our teams, to spread the benefits
• Capturing the heart of people — to achieve results

Introduction

The data tells a sobering story. In July 2025, Gartner reported that 72 percent of CIOs said their organizations were either breaking even or losing money on AI investments. Also in 2025, MIT found that despite $30-40 billion invested in generative AI, only 5 percent of organizations have achieved measurable value. These disappointing returns are due to many factors — and a significant one is people engagement.

“Lack of education and training” has been found to be the number one barrier to AI adoption: 62 percent of respondents cited it as a primary obstacle, and this has now been the top obstacle for five years in a row (The Marketing AI Institute’s *2025 State of Marketing AI Report)*. The human factor — not the technology — is where AI falters.

At its core, AI doesn’t lead, collaborate or create trust. People do. And if we want to unlock the full potential of AI in our organizations, we need to focus as much on people as we do on technology issues.

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1. Reframing our approach to AI — Action is leadership

One of the biggest barriers to adopting AI is the inner voice that says, “I’m not technical enough.” I’ve heard this countless times — even from senior legal leaders. The truth is, no one is an AI expert. The technology is evolving too fast for anyone to claim mastery.

I experienced this firsthand. With a background in advanced science at University and years of experience leading legal technology transformations — from e-billing to automating contracts and more — I had to push myself away from holding back when AI arrived.

And yet, in the words of Cat Moon, Vanderbilt University Law School Professor, who presented at Gilbert + Tobin’s “Women + AI APAC Summit 2025” earlier this year, when it comes to AI, make “Leadership is Action” your mantra. Her message was a beautiful example of a strategy that is simple yet powerful: take action, because action is leadership.

Her movement challenged women in particular (but is applicable to all) to decide whether they will be the *observers* or the *creators* in the AI journey. She encouraged us to take small steps, to form communities with like-minded individuals and to cascade the learnings to empower others. My view is that the key is to lead by doing, not by waiting to feel ready.

So, the next time you catch yourself thinking you are not qualified to lead on AI, remember: leadership isn’t about being the expert. It’s about being the one willing to have a go.

2. Build psychological safety – So teams can learn

Once you have decided to act, the next question is how to lead others through this transformation. While technical AI training is a must, the real differentiator is psychological safety — the foundation of high-performing teams.

When people feel unsafe, they shut down. They fear looking foolish, making mistakes, or appearing less competent if they use AI.

Leaders need to counteract this by creating environments where curiosity outruns fear. That means saying, “Let’s learn together,” and normalizing experimentation. It’s okay to fail. It’s okay not to know. It’s okay to ask for help.

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Practical steps include regular team reflections — sharing what worked and what didn’t — and leaders openly admitting their own missteps. This models the kind of courage and openness that innovation requires.

But we also need to address the deeper fears. People worry that AI will take their jobs or diminish their professional value. The answer isn’t empty reassurance but honest dialogue. Explain what you know, acknowledge uncertainty, and reaffirm that the profession still depends on human judgment, empathy and creativity.

3. Capturing the hearts of people — To get adoption of change initiatives

AI is often treated as something mysterious and unprecedented. In reality however, it is another form of change — and the principles of good change management still apply.

Every major transformation I have led, from document automation to workflow redesign and more, has reinforced one lesson: success hinges on early buy-in. You can have the best tool in the world, but if people don't see *why* it matters, adoption will stall.

To build genuine engagement, make sure you appeal to both the head and the heart.

- Start with logic — align AI initiatives with business objectives and demonstrate value.
- But also connect with what your people really care about — for example, how it will ease their workload, grow their skills, or create opportunities.

Involve your team from the outset. Consult them on the problem, empower them to design solutions, and let them lead implementation. When people have a hand in shaping change, resistance turns into ownership.

And finally, avoid FOMO-driven decisions. Just because a new AI tool is trending doesn't mean your organization needs it and you don't want to find that out at the end, after all the hard work to get it implemented! Adopt technology with intent, not out of fear of being left behind.

Conclusion

The future of work will undoubtedly be powered by technology — but that technology is wielded by people.

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To thrive in the AI era, people need to:

- **Reframe** our mindsets — don't take a back seat to AI developments. Remember, action is leadership.
- **Foster psychological safety** — so curiosity can cascade and flourish within our teams.
- **Lead with heart (and logic) to get buy-in** — engage people early in meaningful change by investing in the "why."

AI enables progress — but people make it purposeful. Its success will depend on our ability to embed it in the work, values, and motivations that drive people every day.

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