

10 things you should know about managing in the robotic age

Did employees check in on time? Complete the right training? Meet their goals? These are the traditional oversights and responsibilities we associate with being a manager. But with the advent of automation and artificial intelligence, are we all at risk of being replaced by “robobosses?”

What is the impact of automation on the management role?

- 1 Over the next three to five years, cognitive technologies such as speech recognition will have a profound impact on work, workers, and organizations.¹
- 2 An estimated 47% of total US employment is “at risk” from computerization over the next decade or two.²
- 3 At its recent IT Expo, one of Gartner’s key predictions was that by 2018, more than 3 million US workers will be supervised by a roboboss.³
- 4 One reason why businesses and industries will continue to automate around the world, is that automation could raise productivity growth globally by 0.8 to 1.4% annually.⁴
- 5 The importance of human interaction is evident in two sectors that, so far, have a relatively low technical potential for automation: healthcare and education.⁵

How can human resources professionals evolve to meet the challenge?

- 1 MIT Economist David Autor believes the degree to which machines will substitute for human labor is overstated.⁶
- 2 Organizational leaders should understand automation choices, costs, and value and turn their talent practices to develop skills, creativity, and emotional intelligence.¹
- 3 Look for the positive. Rodney Brooks, a robotics expert, sees technology as offering a chance to get rid of mundane, dull jobs.¹
- 4 Human resources professionals should seize on automation as a way to liberate and elevate their role, providing not just information, but analysis and insight into the right staffing.³
- 5 As part of an effective and sophisticated human capital strategy, HR professionals should use data (including behavioral characteristics) to take a more credible, prescriptive approach to interacting with the organization.

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1. Redesigning work in an era of cognitive technologies. David Schatsky, Jeff Schwartz, Deloitte Review 17, July 27, 2015.

2. The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerization? Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael Osborne. Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford, Sept. 17, 2013.

3. Robots, humans and a new role for HR, Marcus Mossberger, HR.com, Dec. 2, 2016.

4. Harnessing automation for a future that works. James Manyika, Michael Chui, Mehdi Miremadi, Jacquesughin, Katy George, Paul Willmott, Martin Dewhurst, McKinsey Global Institute, Jan. 2017.

5. Where machines could replace humans – and where they can’t (yet). Michael Chui, James Manyika, Mehdi Miremadi, McKinsey Quarterly, July 2016.

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