

Digital Life

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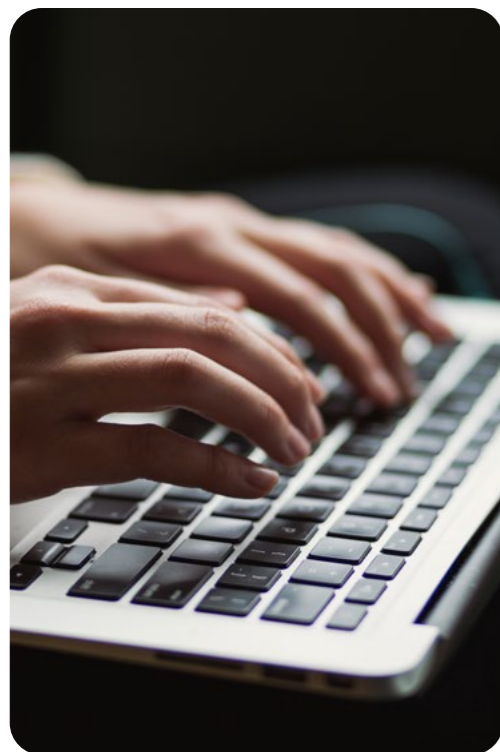


*Insights on
employee experience*

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Editor's note

A funny thing happened on the way to publishing the Employee Experience issue of Digital Life. Around the world and across industries, the employees we sought to honor and uplift were being disrespected and diminished by inflation, layoffs, and other abusive conditions—not exactly the employee experience we advocate.

Regardless of conditions, however, employees are your company's ambassadors to your customers, partners, and the world at large. And they are the key to success. Simply put, you take care of your employees. Your employees take care of your customers. Your customers take care of your organization. Your employees' experience is a worthy priority.

Samudhra Sendhil kicks off the issue with "The metrics trap: How you can unlock success for your organization with effective metrics management." Diving into Goodhart's law—i.e., when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure—Sam writes about the law's impact on employee experience and highlights the all-too-common tendency of individuals, employees,

and managers to fall victim to this phenomenon.

The antidote to mistaking a measure for a target lies in effective metrics management. Sam stresses the significance of ensuring that employees understand how they are evaluated, enabling them to maintain peak productivity and job satisfaction without feeling the need to manipulate the system for success. Additionally, the article offers practical suggestions for organizations to establish appropriate metrics for their unique needs.

Priyanka Roy considers the exponential growth of low-code and no-code applications in the last few years as organizations. By embracing these tools, organizations can create a new generation of skilled citizen developers and thereby significantly improve the employee experience.

Priyanka's article, "Democratizing technology is the key to improving the employee experience," explores this trend, detailing how citizen development can lead to a more engaged and fulfilled workforce by empowering employees to address their own challenges and providing avenues to upskill themselves.

It also looks at some best practices to avoid potential pitfalls, such as security and scaling issues, and understand the importance of involving IT departments in citizen developer programs.

In "The Ritual Revolution: Redefining Workplace Culture for the Modern Era," Naveena Srinivas looks at the workplace rituals and the crucial role they continue to play in employee experience, even in the digital age. Rituals, she writes, hold special meaning for employees marking important events, building social connections, and creating a sense of belonging and community.

But implementing digital workplace rituals comes with its own set of challenges and best practices. In her article, Naveena provides an overview of workplace rituals in the digital age and their benefits for employee

engagement, motivation, and productivity. She also discusses how co-creation, employee involvement, and a sense of community are essential for successful implementation.

John Donegan wraps up the issue by addressing employees' AI anxiety in "AI threatens to usher in an era of technological job displacement." AI consternation is spreading, John notes, with over 1,000 experts calling for a six-month moratorium on generative AI development.

In his article, John addresses the very plausible threat of AI augmenting, improving—and perhaps taking away—our jobs. Describing generative AI as the latest in a cycle of technological panics, he acknowledges change is on the horizon yet concludes that we do not need to worry about large-scale job displacement.



Brent Dorshkind
Editor, ManageEngine



The metrics trap: How you can unlock success for your organization with effective metrics management

By Samudhra Sendhil
Enterprise Analyst, ManageEngine

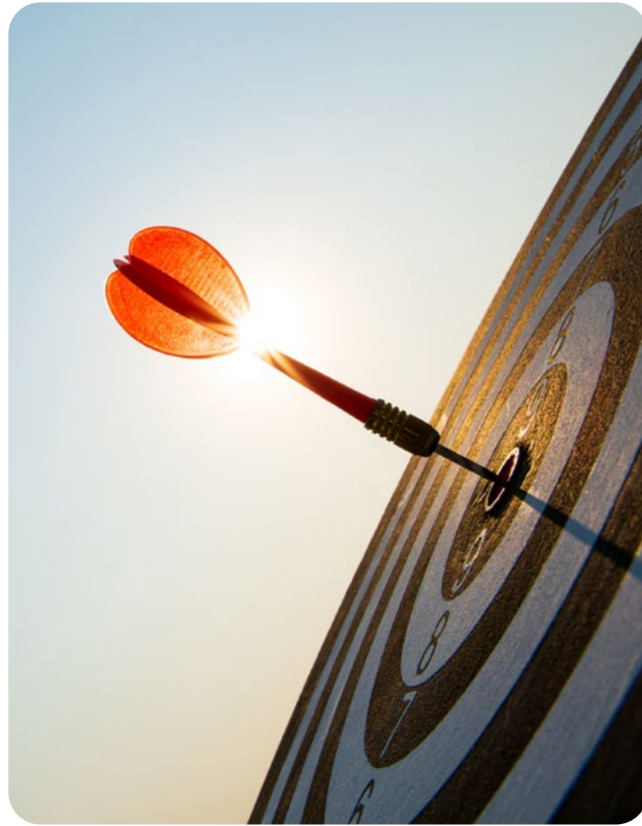
It was the year 1975. Economist Charles Goodhart wrote, “Any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes.”

This might seem like a lot of words that do not make sense. In a more generalized manner, it means, “When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.”

To break it down further, when you focus too much on optimizing a specific metric, people will start to manipulate that metric, leading to unintended consequences.

We’ve all experienced Goodhart’s law in one way or another. Let’s take a real-life example of how this works in organizations.

Imagine you’re a manager at a call center, and your team’s performance is measured based on the number of calls they handle in a day. In an effort to improve this metric, you implement a new policy that encourages agents to rush through calls to handle more of them. Then one day, to no one’s surprise, you stumble upon an employee being rude to a customer on the phone and not addressing queries patiently. This is what you can expect when your measures do not align with your long-term goals. Eventually, this will lead to lower customer satisfaction ratings and increased customer churn.



difficult to manipulate this rubric. Your employees can and will play the system, and you cannot blame them because they are simply dancing to the music you've set.

Previously, it was at least easy to differentiate between "good" vs. "bad" practices, thanks to in-person communication. But, as we went remote, and more recently, increasingly hybrid, the subtle cues we send out began to matter a lot. Do you see some of your employees sending work emails very late in the night, or see them online during the weekends? (Hold on. Why were you online during the weekends?) Before you know it, we've all fallen prey to Goodhart's law.

We don't pay attention to everything with our eyes and ears anymore, especially with the advent of technology. We rely on benchmarks and generalizations, like KPIs or user metadata, to judge employees' behavior at the workplace. Here, there is a rift between the information that we know vs. the information that we do not know. Even if you collect all the data you possibly can, it is still just a summary of the person and not the whole picture of who they are as an employee and an independent individual.

Moreover, when short-term profits are prioritized over long-term sustainability, it can result in negative consequences such as exploitation, environmental degradation, and public backlash.

The impact of Goodhart's law: Going beyond performance metrics

As a leader, the unit you use to measure success matters more than you think. If you judge employees based on how late they clock out or how well they socialize with the rest of their team, their authenticity will quickly become ingenuine. Indeed, all the world is a stage, and we are just actors in the end. In this case, even more so. It is not all that

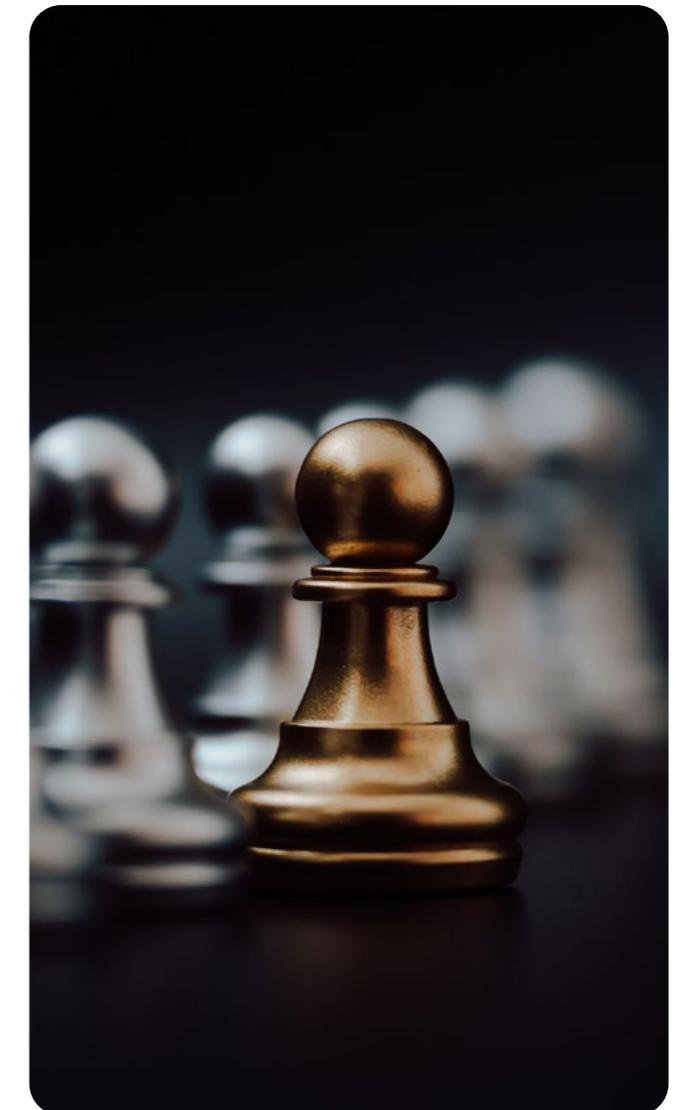
[Research](#) says that only 7% of people convey their true sentiments through spoken communication. So, how can you know whether your employees are truly happy with their work? They might be saying yes but their tone and body language may convey something else that you are not able to see.

More importantly, what happens to employees who truly put in all the work and are proactive, but they simply are unable to express it in a way that is more visible?

This is exactly why you, as a leader, have the responsibility to establish metrics that measure productivity beyond performance value. Which brings us to the next question: Where do you begin?

The role of leaders in preventing metrics gamification

Organizational culture, especially the type of leadership, plays a significant role in how Goodhart's law works in practice. If an organization prioritizes performance metrics above all else, employees may feel pressure to meet those metrics at any cost. This can create a culture of competition, where employees may be less likely to collaborate or share information.



On the other hand, if an organization values teamwork and innovation, employees may be more likely to work together to find creative solutions, even if those solutions don't immediately result in meeting performance metrics. Incentivizing employees can also contribute to the effects of Goodhart's law. While incentives can motivate employees to work harder and perform better, the type of incentive that works best may vary depending on the organization, job role, and industry.

For example, financial incentives such as bonuses may be effective for sales teams, but they may not work as well for creative teams where intrinsic motivation is more important. Incentives may also have unintended consequences, such as employees focusing solely on the incentivized goal to the detriment of other important factors.

To prevent metrics gamification, leaders play a critical role. The first step towards achieving this is to establish clear goals and expectations that align with the organization's mission. This helps ensure that employees understand what is expected of them and what they will be measured on. Additionally, leaders should use a balanced set of metrics that reflect

multiple aspects of performance, not just a single metric.

This reduces the likelihood of employees focusing solely on one metric at the expense of others.

Leaders also need to be careful not to fall into the watermelon effect trap. You might think your metrics are green and everything is hunky-dory, but the reality might be quite different. This is because sometimes, even if your metrics are looking positive, your customers might still be unhappy with your service. This is much like a watermelon—green on the outside, but red when you look deeper inside.

You can be on the lookout for such unusual activity, like sudden spikes in performance or outliers that are significantly above or below the norm. This can help identify potential cases of metrics gamification. Encouraging honesty and transparency in reporting metrics is also important.

Leaders can create a culture where employees feel comfortable reporting any concerns they have about the metrics being used. It is important to remember that more than outputs, outcomes matter. Behavior that supports the goals of organizations, such as taking initiative or going above and beyond to do the right thing should be rewarded, even if it does not directly correlate with the desired outputs.

Case studies: Examples of successful incentive design

Creating the right incentives can be a powerful tool to help employees be happy, motivated, and more importantly, a contributing factor towards positive outcomes for the organization as a whole. An example of successful incentive design is Zoho Corp's [Zoho Schools](#) program, which allows employees to teach and mentor students on various aspects of software development, such as design, business, and technology.

By incentivizing employees to share their knowledge and expertise, Zoho Corp has not only improved the skill set of its employees but has also fostered a culture of collaboration and teamwork. This program has been successful in creating a culture of learning and knowledge sharing within the company, which has helped to break down silos and encourage cross-functional collaboration.

The impact of these programs on Zoho Corp's organizational culture and employee experience has been significant, highlighting the importance of aligning employee goals with company goals through effective incentive design.





Goodhart's law draws a fine line that is more of a paradox to be balanced than a problem to be solved.

Indeed, choosing the best metrics for your company will take a lot of time, effort, and trial and error to get it right. You can rest easy with the fact that not everyone gets it right the first time around. Metrics should only serve as a measure of success or pain points—they should not become their own, tangible work.

Goodhart's law is a reminder to be cautious of blindly following metrics without considering their broader implications and unintended consequences. It highlights the importance of finding a balance between quantitative and qualitative measures, and taking a holistic approach to measuring success.

Democratizing technology is the key to improving the employee experience

By Priyanka Roy
Senior Enterprise Evangelist

We live in a world where technology is increasingly and deeply permeating every sphere and every space. The world, as it is right now, was inconceivable just a few years ago.

As technology advances at a breakneck speed, our ability to innovate has also been progressing in leaps and bounds. In such a world, organizations need to not only keep pace with this rate of innovation but also figure out how to stay ahead of the curve. Every industry and every market is witnessing immense upheaval and uncertainty right now. However, one thing is certain: Capitalizing on digital technologies is the way forward.

So, how can organizations take the next step in embracing technology? We have all been reading about the meteoric rise of AI, how machines are learning to do pretty much anything one can think of, and the importance of data and business intelligence, but what is that one thing that can truly create the workplace of the future? Citizen developers.

One of the most exciting trends in recent years has been the rise of low-code and no-code applications, which enable non-technical employees to develop applications with minimal coding knowledge. From mobile apps to internal

workflows, low-code and no-code applications can transform the way businesses operate and empower their employees. These non-tech employees who create their own applications using low-code and no-code tools are known as citizen developers.

But what makes low-code technology so appealing? For one, it offers a faster, more cost-effective alternative to traditional application development methods. With low-code and no-code tools, employees can create and deploy applications in a matter of hours or days, rather than the months or years it would take using traditional methods. This increased speed and agility can give organizations a competitive edge and enable them to respond quickly to changing market conditions.

Furthermore, low-code and no-code applications empower employees by giving them the tools to solve their own problems and create their own solutions. By fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration, organizations can create a more engaged and motivated workforce. And by upskilling their employees, they can prepare them for the jobs of the future and promote lifelong learning.

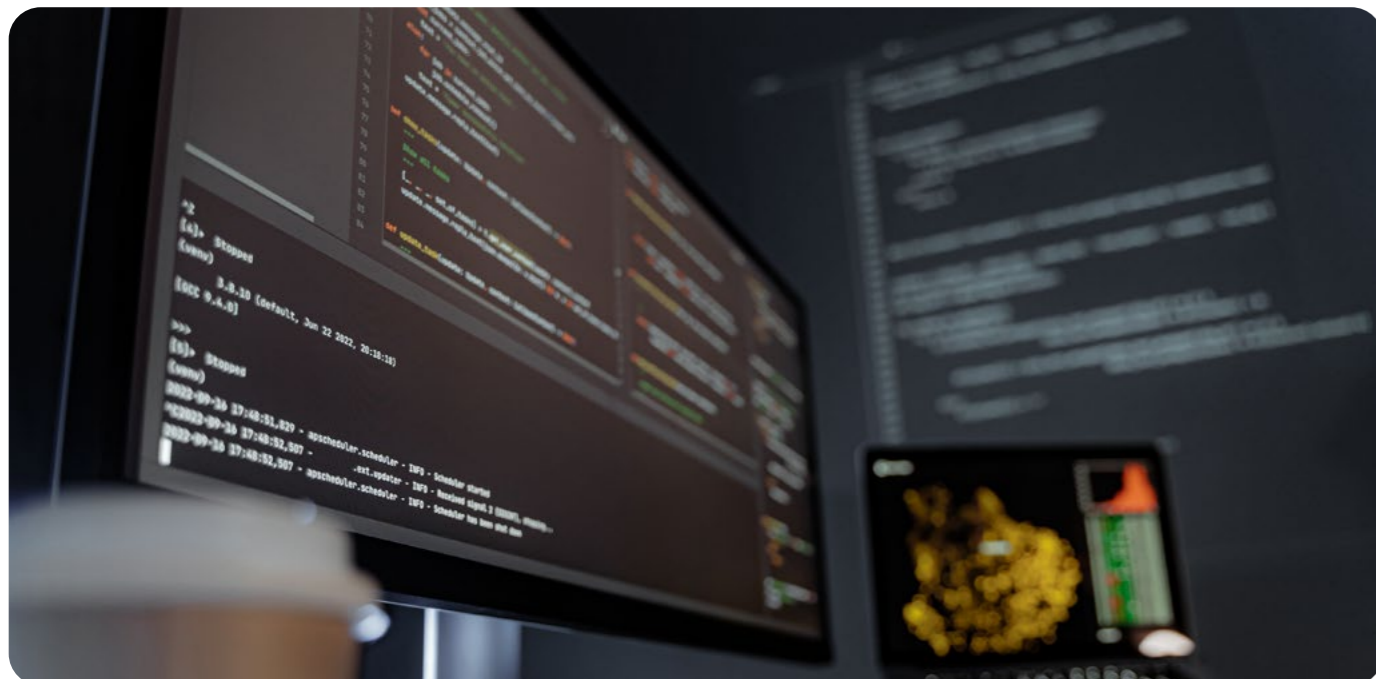
Democratizing tech literacy

With the right training and policies in place, citizen developers can create enormous value by introducing fresh perspectives and new initiatives. Low-code and no-code enable non-tech employees to quickly build the processes and applications that they need to address the challenges that they face. If the same process had to be routed through the tech department, it would become a long and tedious process as they are often overworked. However, embracing low-code applications not only enables employees to upskill themselves while swiftly addressing their own pain points, it also enables tech professionals to focus on more interesting and important tasks.

The growth of low-code and no-code

applications has been rapid in recent years, as an increasing number of organizations have recognized the potential benefits of these tools. According to a [recent report](#) by Gartner, the worldwide market for low-code development technologies is projected to total \$26.9 billion in 2023.

One of the most significant benefits of low-code and no-code applications is that they enable non-technical users to acquire new skills and knowledge, which can help them in their current roles and prepare them for future positions. By encouraging employees to learn new skills and take on new challenges, organizations can create a more engaged and motivated workforce, leading to greater job satisfaction and higher employee retention rates.



The benefits of low-code applications

Faster time-to-market

Low-code and no-code applications enable organizations to create new solutions more quickly and efficiently than traditional development methods, reducing the time and resources required to bring new products and services to market.

Improved productivity

By enabling non-technical users to create their own applications and solutions, low-code and no-code applications can help organizations to improve productivity and reduce the burden on their IT departments.

Increased innovation

Empowering employees to create their own applications and solutions can foster a culture of innovation and creativity. This can also lead to new products and services that drive growth and profitability.

Cost savings

By reducing the need for specialized technical skills, low-code and no-code applications can help organizations to save money on development costs and enable them to focus their resources on other business priorities.

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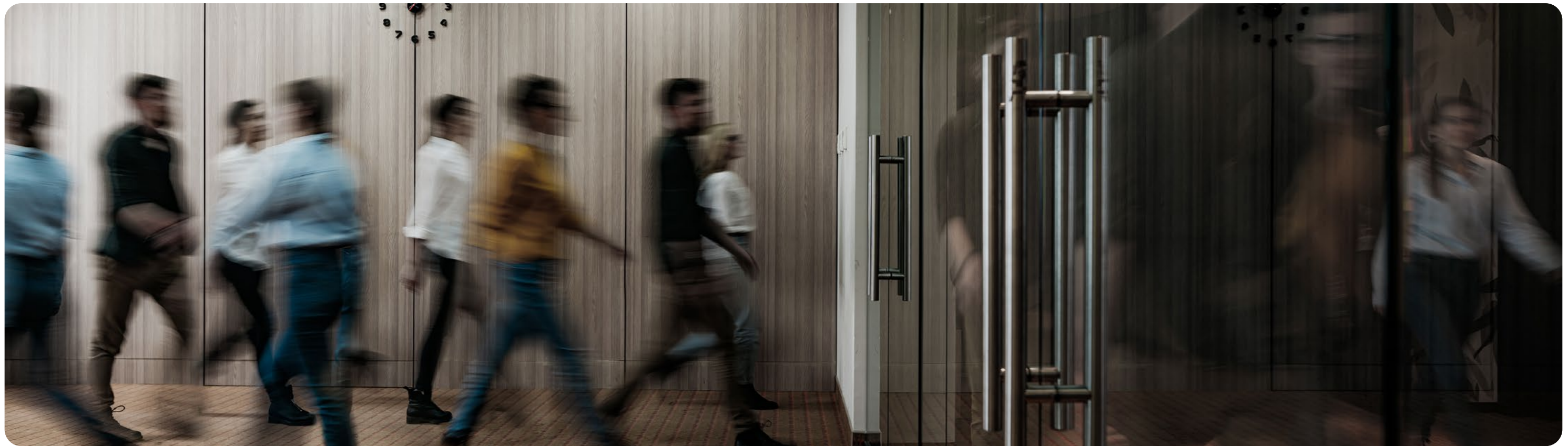


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4





Focusing on citizen developers enhances the employee experience

Empowering employees to build their own applications and solutions can have a significant impact on employee experience. Citizen developers can create applications and solutions that address specific business needs more quickly and efficiently than traditional development methods. By reducing the time and resources needed to build new applications, organizations can improve productivity and responsiveness.

Post-lockdown hybrid workplaces

are witnessing an increasing demand for flexibility, work-life balance, and instant gratification of needs. These needs can be anything ranging from demands for a fair, equal, and diverse workplace to having the right digital tools and resources necessary to get the job done efficiently. Low-code applications fit right into this demand, especially for the digitally savvy younger generation who are used to solving their problems with technology.

However, it is also important to keep scalability in mind. It's good to encourage non-tech employees to build applications that automate their needs. However, applications which

are highly specialized to certain use cases and/or roles will not find much applicability elsewhere. One way to solve this challenge is to ensure that the applications being developed can be used by either multiple target groups or in multiple scenarios.

This is where the IT department comes into the picture. IT professionals can help ensure that citizen developers have access to the resources and support they need to create high-quality applications and solutions. This can include providing access to development tools and platforms, as well as offering guidance and support throughout the information gathering and

development process.

In addition, the IT department can help ensure that all applications and solutions created by citizen developers meet the organization's standards for security, compliance, and quality. This can involve thoroughly vetting low-code platforms, ensuring citizen developers have sufficient awareness about technology best practices, implementing security protocols and compliance requirements, and ensuring that all applications and solutions integrate seamlessly with existing systems, leading to greater job satisfaction and higher employee retention rates.

Building a citizen developer program

1



Create awareness

Help your employees understand the importance and benefits of low-code tools. Start with a digital dexterity assessment that helps you understand the current capabilities of your workforce.

2



Training and upskilling

Based on the skills that they already possess, draw up a plan to help your employees to digitally upskill themselves.

3



Rewards and incentives

Your citizen developer program is much more likely to succeed if your employees feel consistently motivated to participate in the program. You can do this by introducing some basic metrics to evaluate the applications being developed, such as download or usage rates and user feedback and reviews. Based upon the metrics set, you can reward the best performers accordingly.

4



Establish governance

Make sure to have some level of control and policies in place to keep an eye on the applications being developed. It can be as basic as who can build applications, what kind of applications are approved, who approves the applications being proposed, and so on.

In conclusion, low-code applications represent a significant opportunity for organizations to transform their operations and empower their employees. By enabling non-technical employees to upskill themselves, organizations can foster a culture of innovation and collaboration that leads to greater job satisfaction, employee engagement, and business growth.



However, organizations must be aware of the potential risks and take steps to mitigate them to ensure the success of their citizen developer programs. By establishing clear guidelines and standards, providing adequate training and support, involving their IT departments, and adopting a centralized approach to application development and management, organizations can minimize the risks and reap the benefits of low-code technologies.

As the workplace evolves, it's essential for organizations to embrace new technologies and empower their employees with the tools they need to succeed. With low-code capabilities, organizations can do just that—create a more innovative, productive, and engaged workforce that is ready to tackle the challenges of the future.



The ritual revolution: Redefining workplace culture for the modern era

By Naveena Srinivas
Enterprise Analyst, ManageEngine

Have you ever found yourself dreading going to work in the morning? Or feeling like you're just a small cog in a giant corporate machine? Many of us have experienced this feeling at some point in our careers. But what if I told you that workplace rituals could help transform your workday from mundane to memorable? It's true—workplace rituals are a way to inject some fun and personality into your daily routine, and they've been shown to increase employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

In today's fast-paced corporate world, there are a multitude of factors that contribute to the overall employee experience. From the quality of the work environment to the relationships between colleagues, every aspect of the workplace can profoundly impact an individual's job satisfaction and productivity. However, one element that is often overlooked but has a significant impact is workplace rituals.

There exist countless practices that employees engage in, some formal and some not so much. From the mundane morning coffee run to the annual holiday party, these actions make up the fabric of workplace

culture. But have you ever stopped to ponder the significance of these rituals? How they shape the way we work, communicate, and ultimately succeed? In this article, we dive into the quirks and nuances of these practices and how they can ultimately shape a company's culture and the well-being of its employees.

A great employee experience is one where all of the elements (atmosphere, culture, relationships, etc.) come together to create a positive and meaningful experience for the employee. It's about feeling valued, supported, and engaged. It's about having opportunities to learn, grow, and make a difference.

What exactly are workplace rituals?

Rituals define who we are, they're things we do that we can rely on and enable us to emphasize what matters to us. However, rituals almost always have a trigger—a time of day or a milestone, for instance—and are thus intermittent in nature. Workplace rituals are like the secret element that helps organizations thrive. One thing rituals do is make connectivity a lot easier to achieve.

In their podcast, Bryan Hancock, the global head of McKinsey's talent work, [speaks](#) of a ritual in which one person thanks someone for their work from the previous week and then transfers the task to another person for the coming week. Another example is a coworker being recognized for something noteworthy that has been achieved or a threshold that they have crossed. Bryan also remembers a ritual at his previous place of work: first-deal dinners for the corporate team. He then goes on to say that "rituals can be routine ways to acknowledge being together, acknowledge one another, as well as to recognize what is, by definition, not routine—a first, a transition, a movement to what's next."



It is these little things that warrant power to establish a collaborative, engaged, and productive environment. Let's take a look at some of the most common workplace rituals that organizations rely on to achieve these outcomes.

First up, the daily stand-up meeting. These brief, 15-minute meetings can help teams stay on track, share progress updates, and identify roadblocks before they become bigger problems. These meetings are [said to last 63% longer](#) when team members sit rather than stand during the meeting, so adhering to the format's namesake will bolster its efficacy. Plus, standing up has been shown to boost creativity and energy levels, so it's a win-win.

Another popular workplace ritual is the company retreat. A [survey conducted](#) for the CFOs in the pre-pandemic era revealed an under-utilization of annual corporate retreats (only 1 in 5 admit to offering them). Of the respondents whose companies did offer corporate retreats, 40% indicated that the "single greatest benefit of having a corporate retreat" is that it increases teamwork and morale. While 20% of the remaining respondents believe that a change in environment can stimulate new ideas and perspectives thereby fostering creativity, and promote innovation.

And of course, we can't forget about the humble birthday celebration ritual, can we? While it may seem



like a small gesture, recognizing employees on their special day can go a long way towards building a positive work environment and showing appreciation for their contributions.

Shift in workspace seems to work fine. But what about the rituals?

Workplace rituals play a significant role in shaping the employee experience, regardless of the where of work. Organizations have had to adapt their rituals to fit a virtual or hybrid format, such as team-building activities and happy hours. However, remote workers are more likely to struggle with loneliness and isolation, making it difficult for virtual rituals to have the same impact as in-person interactions. Organizations that prioritize creating a positive employee experience, regardless of location, and are willing to experiment with new and innovative rituals will be best positioned to succeed.

While workplace rituals are not a guarantee of success, they do play an important role in fostering a positive employee experience and creating a strong organizational culture. Without workplace rituals, organizations may struggle to build a sense of community and connection

among employees, which can lead to lower engagement, morale, and productivity.

It's not just about ensuring a positive impact on employee experience, but it's also about the profits. Jacob Morgan, author of *The Employee Experience Advantage*, says that organizations that prioritize employee experience are [four times more profitable](#) than those that don't. Rituals that promote positivity and foster a sense of community can help create a happy, engaged workforce that is more productive and more likely to stay with the organization long-term.

What exactly are workplace rituals?

When everyone in the workplace participates in a shared ritual, it can create a feeling of belonging and promote a positive workplace culture. By involving employees in the co-creation of a ritual, it can also promote a sense of ownership and investment in the ritual, making it more meaningful and impactful for everyone involved.

With that said, developing workplace rituals that are liked by all employees can be challenging, as individual preferences and needs can vary widely. However, there are several strategies organizations can use to increase the likelihood of developing successful workplace rituals:

1 Solicit feedback

One of the most effective ways to develop workplace rituals that are well-liked by employees is to ask for their input. Conduct surveys or focus groups to gather feedback on what types of rituals would be meaningful and engaging for employees.

2 Experiment and iterate

Workplace rituals don't have to be set in stone. Encourage experimentation and iteration to find what works best for your organization and its employees. This could involve trying out different types of rituals, gathering feedback, and refining the approach over time.

4 Prioritize inclusivity

Workplace rituals should align with the values and mission of the organization. Consider how rituals can reinforce and promote the organization's values, and how they can contribute to a positive employee experience.

3 Align with company values

When developing workplace rituals, it's important to be mindful of diversity and inclusivity. Ensure that all employees have the opportunity to participate in rituals, and that the rituals themselves are culturally sensitive and inclusive.

5 Have fun

Workplace rituals should be enjoyable and engaging for employees. Incorporate elements of fun, creativity, and playfulness into rituals to make them more appealing and memorable.

By following these strategies and being open to experimentation and feedback, organizations can increase the likelihood of developing workplace rituals that are well-liked and engaging for employees. It's clear that employees who feel valued and supported by their employers are more likely to develop a personal investment in their work, which can lead to higher levels of productivity, innovation, and loyalty.

As organizations continue to navigate the changing landscape of work in the digital age, prioritizing employee care and building a culture of support and appreciation should be a top priority. Ultimately, investing in employee care can lead to a more motivated and committed workforce, benefiting both employees and organizations alike.

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Employees who don't feel supported in their professional goals are **3x more likely** to be looking for a new job.

Source: [TINYpulse](#)



AI threatens to usher in an era of technological job displacement

By John Donegan
Enterprise Analyst, ManageEngine

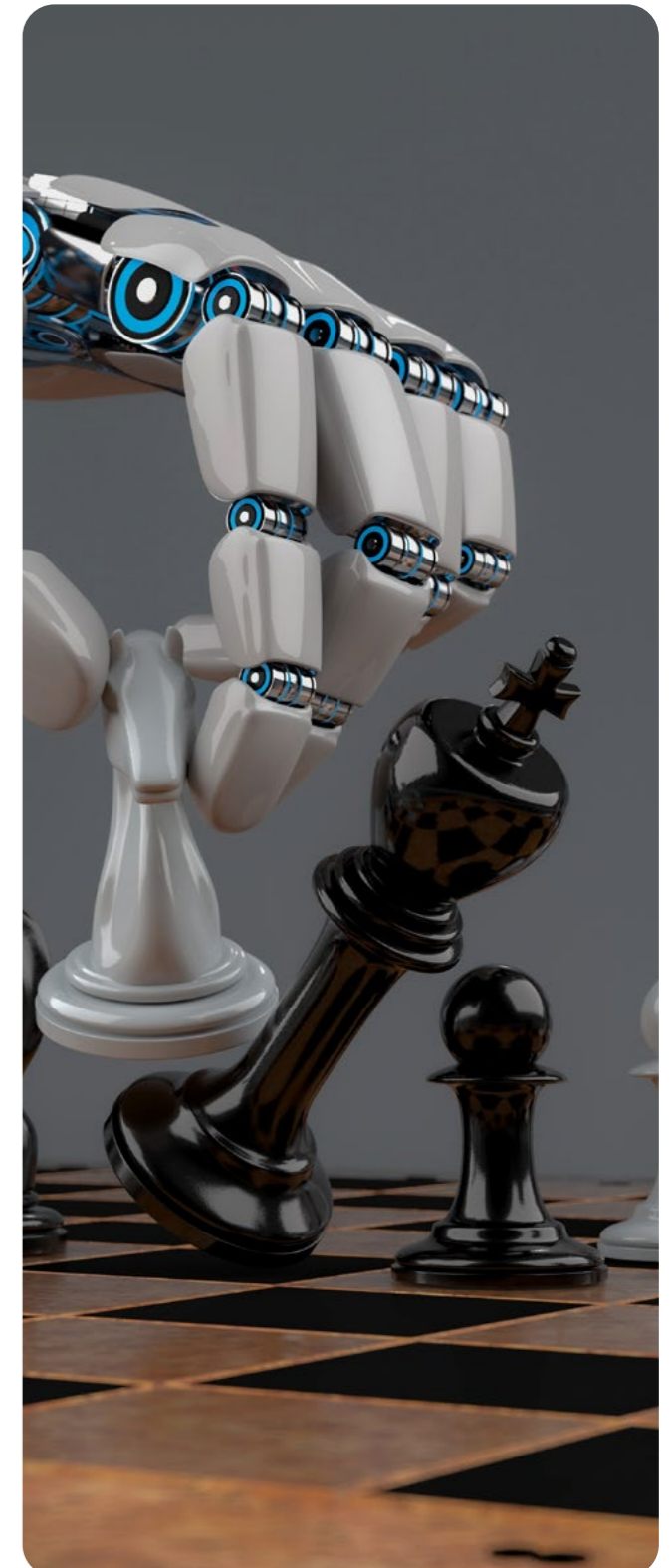
The AI hysteria isn't dying down.

In a recent [blog post](#), Bill Gates calls AI “the most important advance in technology since the graphical user interface.” Claiming AI is as important as the microprocessor, PC, Internet, and mobile phone, Gates—like most of us—sees extraordinary potential for societal benefit and harm.

The societal harm concerns have reached a fever pitch. An [open letter](#) pleading for the AI community to pause training AI systems more powerful than ChatGPT-4 has received over 1,000 signatures. Among the signatories are Sridhar Vembu, Steve Wozniak, Elon Musk, Ray Kurzweil, and Stephen Wolfram.

In addition to consternation over [privacy](#), algorithmic biases, and the spread of hyper-convincing disinformation, potential job displacement is causing a great deal of AI anxiety.

A recent Goldman Sachs report estimates AI will affect 300 million jobs worldwide. According to the report, the U.S., Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, and Sweden are projected to be the most affected countries (India was Goldman's least affected country).



Speaking with [ABC News' Rebecca Jarvis](#), OpenAI CEO Sam Altman says, “It is going to eliminate a lot of current jobs, that's true. We can make much better ones.”

Recent AI developments will render some jobs obsolete

In March 2023, researchers from UPenn, OpenResearch, and OpenAI released their working paper, “GPTs are GPTs: An early look at the labor market impact potential of large language models.”

The [findings suggest](#) that “80% of the U.S. workforce could have at least 10% of their work tasks affected by the introduction of LLMs, while approximately 19% of workers may see at least 50% of their tasks impacted.”

The professions on the potential chopping block include a host of white-collar positions, such as content creators, market researchers, financial analysts, entry-level investment bankers, accountants,

graphic designers, customer service agents, and insurance underwriters. Generative AI stands to shake up dozens of industries, not the least of which include software development, journalism, and higher education.

Software development

According to a recent [Semafor report](#), OpenAI is trying to make basic coding obsolete. In fact, the Microsoft-funded company is currently hiring 1,000 contractors in Latin America and Eastern Europe, 60% of which will engage in data labeling efforts. This isn't OpenAI's first foray into the space, as it already offers Codex, a generative AI tool that translates natural language into code. Additionally, Github (owned by Microsoft) offers Copilot, an adaptation of ChatGPT that helps with developers' programming tasks and answers coding questions in real time.

There is already a global developer shortage, so the software development sector is unlikely to be upended; if anything, the AI code-generation tools will augment work and assist existing developers.

Journalism

Mathias Döpfner, CEO of the media company that owns Insider, Politico, and the German tabloid Bild, recently sent a [memo to his employees](#), warning them about AI. Cautioning that layoffs were looming, Döpfner “urges newsrooms to place a greater emphasis on commentary, exclusive news, and investigations that can't be done by machines.”

Buzzfeed and CNET have already started using generative AI tools to create content. We'll have to wait and see how that works out for them.

Higher education

Some schools and scholarly journals are opting to ban AI-generated text tools, like OpenAI's ChatGPT-4 and Google's Bard. These schools currently rely on detectors, such as OpenAI's detector tool; however, these tools' efficacy may be short-lived, as recent incendiary [research from University of Maryland](#) suggests that detecting AI-generated text will not be possible in the future. Needless to say, an inability to detect AI-generated text would have far-reaching consequences for higher education.

Despite all these concerns, it's important to remind ourselves that

emerging technologies are almost always ushering in some form of panic. Be it the written word, electricity, radio, television, personal computer, internet, mobile phone, or social media, we've been here before.



Generative AI is the latest in a Sisyphean cycle of technological panics

In a paper offering methodological advice for researchers, particularly psychologists, Amy Orben, a researcher and scientist at University of Cambridge, describes what she calls “[the Sisyphean cycle of technological panics](#).”

Orben argues that, as a society, we often overlook the fact that emerging technologies have more similarities than differences with the legacy technologies that came before.

Orben observes a cycle. Emerging technologies cause a panic. Politicians are quick to posture, and perhaps, stand up to Big Tech interests, demonstrating concern for children and other vulnerable populations. Then, academics and scientists come in, calming fears, offering advice to legislators, and providing the public with reassurance. Studies are done, [laws are passed](#), and eventually the anxiety subsides. That is, until the next technology emerges and a new panic ensues.

Taking a technological deterministic perspective (believing that technologies act as a driver of change and affect all areas of social existence), it's easy to quickly link emerging technologies and societal problems.

I wouldn't claim to be a technological determinist; however, I do have anxiety about the emergence of generative AI, as I worry about large-scale disinformation implications, user data privacy violations, AI-powered cyberattacks, and to a far lesser extent—job displacement.

Why we shouldn't worry about large-scale job displacement

As we watch the generative AI race unfold, I suspect we'll see a consolidation of power between deep-pocketed Big Tech companies (e.g., Microsoft, Google, Baidu, Meta, Alibaba) and a handful of AI startups (e.g., OpenAI, DeepMind, Midjourney, StabilityAI, Synthesia). This will cause no shortage of problems; however, technological job displacement is probably my least pressing concern.



For starters, the ontological nature of AI is limiting. AI doesn't have empathy, and it can merely emulate humanness. It is entirely neutral and amoral. In a recent [New York Times Op-Ed](#) Noam Chomsky describes ChatGPT output as "moral indifference born of unintelligence" that is "incapable of distinguishing the possible from the impossible." In short, AI lacks humanness, which ultimately is its greatest weakness.

Sure, AI will render some jobs obsolete, but if rolled out effectively, it will also likely create new jobs, improve productivity, and drive civilization forward. However, this current AI arms race does give me pause; we need to stop and ask ourselves how we should best regulate this technology. The [E.U.'s AI Act](#) is a good start. All that said, I wouldn't worry about mass technological job displacement from AI. After all, most jobs require human judgment.

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