AI for
IT Leaders

New World, New Opportunities for Leaders

It's a new world. How is this creating new opportunities for leaders? For leaders...right now?

Throughout history, leaders have been called upon to address a variety of challenges in their eras. Now is no different. I'd argue that there's no better time to be a leader at the forefront of technology. To be thinking about what it means to use technology to innovate, to use technology to make people better. To use technology to define what it means to be a human, collaborating with machines.

A FEW EXAMPLES FROM THE NOT-SO-DISTANT PAST:

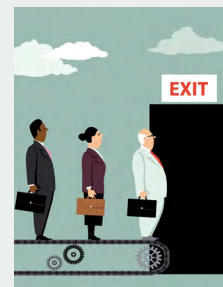We've been here before.
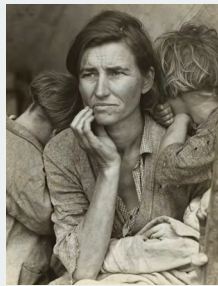
1914   1936   1943   2022

Times are changing again, but it's now a requirement for employees to feel like they're respected, their time is valued, they're trusted. Because although the Great Resignation is morphing into an uncertain What's Next era that combines a whole handful of trends, what remains true is that employees expect now to feel motivated, to feel engaged at work, and to love what they spend their time doing.

And if we organize work through intelligent automation, so employees do less of what they hate doing and more of what they love doing, well, you've just made them better humans. AI-driven automation can give employees back perhaps an hour a day in productive time. And in that hour a day, they can be better spouses, parents, siblings, friends. They can pursue a hobby, they can have more time to do things that otherwise wouldn't get done because they were waiting on hold or experiencing friction at work. That friction of submitting tickets and getting help doesn't have to be the standard practice anymore, and it shouldn't be. We can do better. How? By doing what leaders do, whether it's facing the economic changes or World Wars or the Great Depression or the Great Resignation—innovating. Thinking about what's required to deliver better business outcomes. You, yes you, have that same opportunity today.

Why AI? Why Now?

Why AI? There are a number of important questions to think about before we can really tackle the answer to that big question. Meta-trends again! There are forces that are requiring all of us as leaders to really rediscover the value we can provide to our organizations.

It's a couple of years old now but still rings true to me, this quote from Price Waterhouse Coopers:

> **"The best CIOs are taking on a more strategic role beyond technology implementations. They're focused on meeting business needs and responding to new market demands."**
>
> **pwc**   APRIL 2020

There's an important distinction to be made here — historically, the role of CIO has essentially been as a traffic cop, telling employees what they can't do, what the policies are, what the rules are…color within the lines. While at the same time, employees increasingly aren't comfortable being told what tools to use or where to work or when they need to log in—they want to find their own boundaries. Employees are happy to work hard, but they need to feel respected. And so, as PWC notes, it's incumbent on the next generation of employee service leaders to think about the environment their employees are living in, and deliver a better service experience. Take into account that the workforce is getting younger and that more organizations are borderless and office-less. We're interacting with people in every time zone all throughout the day. We can no longer put our employees in a little box and tell them how to work.

The expectation is that the experience we have with technology outside of work — one that transcends our personal lives — is also available in our lives as employees. And we expect that when we have a problem, a technology issue or an HR question, there's going to be a better way to solve our problem than picking up the phone and calling the help desk. How antiquated a notion is that! To be treated like a ticket. Wait on hold. The person who answers the phone at the call center doesn't necessarily magically have the answer to your question — they're not some all-knowing being waiting for the phone to ring. No, in fact, they need to do the research to find the answer.

But what if that whole experience could be automated? What if getting help from IT or HR at work was as easy as returning a package to Amazon or getting a Netflix movie recommendation or updating your credit card's billing address? That's what we expect in the workplace. That's how technology should work. It's what your employees deserve.

Let's talk macroeconomics for a minute. Everybody understands that today's environment is a very competitive one. Margins are thin. Employees can work from anywhere, and they're heavily sought after. And, if they get disappointed in your organization, it doesn't take much for them to pick up the phone and call your competitor. But they won't do that if you invest in a better employee experience. Then, instead of picking up the phone and calling your competitor, they're going to call their friends and say *you've gotta work here, because I'm doing the best work of my life here!* Turn your most valuable resources, your employees, into your most valuable recruiting tool. Make them love work. They'll not only stick around longer and work that extra hour, they'll love every minute of it.

You as a leader in a service organization are capable of transforming the lives your employees have while they're at work. Strive not for work-life balance, strive for life-work integration. We need to respect that employees remain parents or spouses or siblings or friends. When we hire the employee, we hire the whole person. And part of that is embracing the fact that they may be a caregiver for aging parents, they may be homeschooling their kids. In order to really appreciate everything required to motivate employees to do the best work of their lives (your ultimate goal), it's really important to understand all these external pressures, now more than ever.
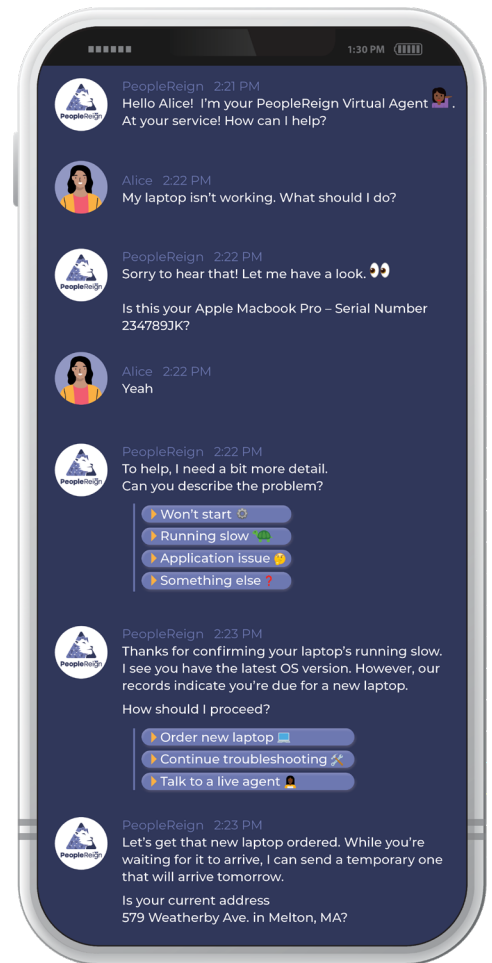
What if getting help from IT or HR at work was as easy as returning a package to Amazon or getting a Netflix movie recommendation.

This is just Chapter 1!

Stay tuned for the full AI for IT Leaders ebook... peoplereign.io/resources

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