

THE AI WAY FORWARD

Artificial intelligence is here to stay, so the smart way forward is to hone the human skills robots can't replicate, and learn the new tech tools to stay employable, the experts say.

Words **RACHEL SMITH**

It's no secret that AI is encroaching on the way we work – fast. Maybe your role has already been impacted, if you're on staff. Perhaps you worry about how it might affect your freelance business. Or you may be pretty sure it won't affect your work or career in any way.

Regardless of where you sit on the scale of 'head in the sand' to 'keeping me up at night', it's time to start learning about it, and learning how to use it, says Sue White, careers writer and creator of the course *Writing with AI: Good to Great*.

"What I'm seeing is the explosion of AI into almost every aspect of work in a way that wasn't happening even a couple of years ago. We really thought it would just impact the grunt work, but what we're seeing is many white collar industries being disrupted in some way by AI – and I don't think many workers have really anticipated that," she explains.

Tony Frost, executive coach and author of *The Professional: A Playbook to Unleash Your Potential and Futureproof Your Success*, agrees. "I think humans and professionals will still be required to drive AI and to read the output and provide advice and all of

that, but AI is clearly going to have a huge impact in the years to come."

WHAT'S CHANGING?

Essentially, AI is reshaping how organisations operate, and how employees carry out their tasks. The numbers are sobering: McKinsey research suggests that up to 375 million people may need to learn new skills and switch into new jobs by 2030.

And with that comes a kind of disbelief and uncertainty, says Sue. "If you're in the 50-something age group, you may be at peak earning and peak expertise in your career, and AI is suddenly shifting how you've done your job or you're being asked to embrace components of it in the job you're doing, which you may or may not be keen to do."

She says grief is a good way to explain how many of us might be feeling. "This is the biggest disruption in the world of work since the printing press, but if you don't shift to a learning mindset over the next five to 10 years, you'll be left behind in ways you can't even comprehend."

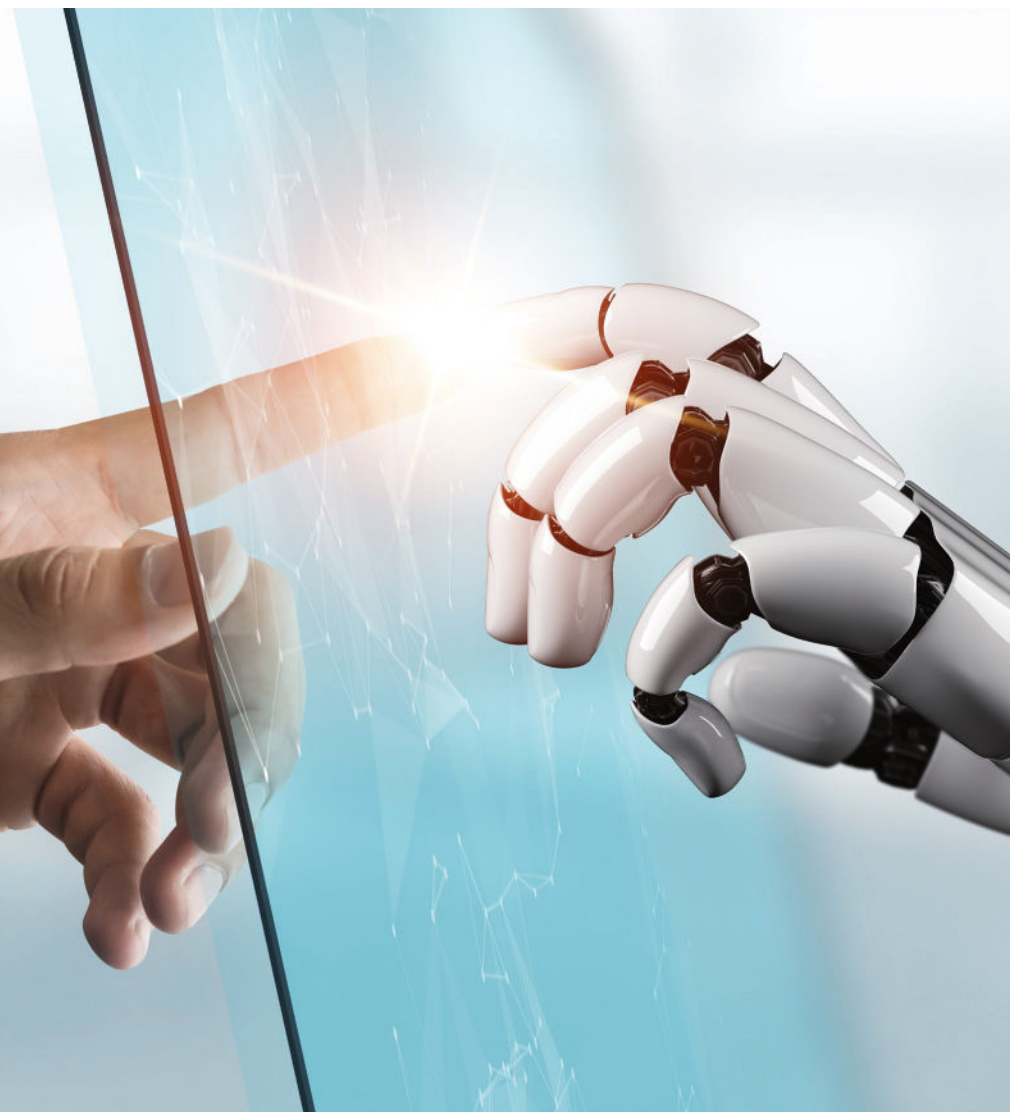
That said, Tony says it's important to remember that older workers have a lot to

offer. "You have experience, judgement, wisdom and expertise – machines can only really give us knowledge. So there's a lot you can learn and leverage. You can mentor others. You can get to grips with AI tools, and add the ethical overlay that's required."

TAKING ACTION

Creating a new toolkit of skills is essential – and it's not all about getting to grips with AI, says Tony. "There are a number of human skills that will become





even more valuable in the next decade, and these include humility; it applies to both leaders and those down the ladder. Being humble doesn't mean you're a soft touch but it can make you a natural leader and a good listener.

"The next one is emotional intelligence, and that's important because you engender better empathy, you can 'read the room' and be aware of your strengths and how to leverage them. The

third is storytelling – because people who are able to tell clever, engaging stories that are relevant to the task at hand can motivate others."

Being a good communicator, someone who can liaise across different groups and interpret technical information will also be valuable, adds Sue. "Problem-solving is also going to be a career benefit because at the moment, AI can solve some problems but not without the human brain driving it." ●

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH AI

If you've never used AI platforms like ChatGPT, begin with some prompts that will provide easy wins, says Sue White. (To get started, go to chatgpt.com and sign up for a free account.) "Ask it, 'I have these three ingredients in my fridge, what can I make?'" Once you've tackled small tasks, you can start using it in the workplace for writing emails or brainstorming – it's very good at that, if you give it the right context and a mission and make sure you check the output for accuracy."

Once you have some AI skills, should you put them on your CV? Sue says yes. "It's a great idea because right now, employers are all looking at how they can use it and if you've figured it out somewhat, that gives you a market edge. A lot of people are using it quietly, but there's power in taking ownership and saying, 'I use it and here's how I use it'."

Tony Frost adds that people can use AI as a career development tool rather than a job threat – from treating it as a coach for help with interviews to asking it to poke holes in your CV. "Just make sure if you use AI to write a cover letter or résumé, you read it carefully and personalise it," he says.