

WHO—OR WHAT—SHOULD DO THE WORK?

AI is forcing leaders to decide what work their strategy requires—and what should remain human, become agent-assisted, or be automated. Most organizations lack the understanding to make those decisions well

PREAMBLE

Over the past year, we've had the opportunity to sit with executives, HR leaders, software companies, AI researchers, investors, and educators as they confront the same reality: AI transformation is not simply a technology rollout. It is a redesign of work.

Executive teams are being asked to determine where AI creates value, how people and agents should work together, what capabilities the organization will need, which roles must change, and which work should remain distinctly human.

Executive teams are being asked to redesign how work gets done.

...how people and agents should work together...

...what capabilities the organization will need...

...which roles must change – and which work should remain distinctly human.

These aren't simply technology decisions.
They're decisions about the future shape of the organization.
Yet behind those conversations sits a quieter frustration: when
strategy turns into execution, many leaders discover they
can't confidently answer questions that suddenly matter.

How is work actually delivered inside our organization?

Why are our highest performers successful?

What capabilities do we truly have—not just on paper, but in practice?

What capabilities do we need to build?

What work will we need tomorrow that we aren't preparing for today?

Where should AI augment people, and which work should be automated?

Those aren't unreasonable questions.

In fact, most leaders assume their organizations should
already be able to answer them.
And after decades of investment in enterprise technology,
why wouldn't they?



The answer is surprisingly simple.

You can't redesign
tomorrow's work until
you understand how
work creates value today.

AI can help redesign work. It cannot compensate for an organization that does not understand the work it is changing.

This paper explores the missing business capability: a living understanding of work, people, capabilities, and outcomes.

CHAPTER 1

We Built Systems to Run the Business, Not Understand It

For more than three decades, enterprise software has transformed how organizations operate.

It made people more productive, standardized processes, connected departments, digitized workflows, automated transactions, and gave leaders unprecedented visibility into how their organizations were performing.

The impact has been extraordinary.

Today's organizations can tell you who was hired, which training was completed, when a performance review is needed, where employees sit in the organization, and what business results were achieved.

That visibility would have been unimaginable a generation ago.

But those systems were designed to answer a different set of questions.



They tell us what happened.
They rarely explain why.

That's not a flaw in enterprise software.
It's simply the problem those systems were built to solve.

An ATS manages hiring.
An HCM manages employees.
A CRM manages customers.
An LMS delivers learning.

Operational systems manage transactions and workflows.
Each became exceptionally good at its purpose. None was designed
to connect information across work, people, capabilities, decisions,
and outcomes—or explain how those relationships create value.

As a result, the understanding executives now need has never existed in
one place.

Some of it lives in enterprise systems.
Some of it lives in documents and reports.
Some of it exists only in the experience and judgment of the people doing
the work.

Every source contributes part of the picture.
None provides the whole.



The understanding already exists.

It's just never existed in one place.

CHAPTER 2

The Missing Foundation

Most organizations believe they understand their work. They have job descriptions, skills frameworks, org charts, process maps, performance reviews, and years of operational data.

In reality, they understand pieces of it.

A job description describes the role.

A skills profile describes the person.

A workflow describes how work is intended to happen.

A performance review records an assessment or outcome.

AI changes roles at the level of tasks and activities—not simply job titles. A skills inventory can describe what people know. It cannot explain how work creates value, which capabilities drive results, or how people and AI should work together.

The questions executives now need answered cut across all of those systems.



What work actually creates value?

What capabilities predict success?

What capabilities do we need to build?

Who is ready for greater responsibility?

Who could become ready through development?

Did learning improve performance?

Where can AI create leverage without sacrificing quality?

No single application can answer those questions.

Those answers emerge only when an organization brings together the knowledge already distributed across its systems, documents, decisions, outcomes, and the experience of its people.

Only when an organization connects what it already knows...

...does fragmented information become understanding a living understanding of how work creates value.

Not another report.
Not another dashboard.
Not another system of record.

Organizations need a living, company-specific model of their work and workforce—one that shows how work creates value, which capabilities drive success, and how people and AI should work together.

Understanding work only becomes valuable when it changes a decision the organization must make.



CHAPTER 3

From Understanding Work to Deciding What Comes Next

Once an organization develops that understanding, deciding who to hire, develop, move, or let go no longer sit apart from decisions about which roles to redesign, where to augment people, and what work to automate. Together, they answer one business question:

How should the organization get the work done?

Every decision strengthens the next one. *That's how organizations continuously adapt.*

Hire. Bring in capabilities the organization does not have and cannot develop fast enough.

Develop. Build the capabilities people need as work and roles change.

Move or redeploy. Put proven capability where it can create more value.

Let go. Make clear decisions when a role is no longer required—or when someone is no longer right for the work that remains.

Redesign. Change roles, responsibilities, and teams around the work the business now requires.

Augment. Combine human judgment with AI to improve speed, quality, or reach.

Automate. Assign repeatable work to technology when it can perform reliably and people can create more value elsewhere.

Taken together, these decisions make AI adoption more deliberate. Organizations can identify where automation creates the greatest leverage, where people continue to create unique value, and where people and agents achieve better outcomes together.

**Every decision strengthens the next one.
That's how organizations continuously adapt.**

Most importantly, these decisions no longer happen in isolation.

A hiring decision shows what a role requires. A learning outcome shows whether development improved performance. A redeployment outcome shows whether someone's strengths transfer to different work. A redesign or automation outcome shows where people and technology produce the best outcome together.

When decisions and outcomes are captured, the organization does not have to reconstruct its understanding as priorities change. Each decision adds context. Each outcome makes that understanding more useful.

The organization doesn't simply become more efficient.

It becomes more adaptive.

As AI capabilities improve, customer expectations evolve, and business priorities shift, the organization's understanding evolves with them. Rather than redesigning the workforce through periodic transformation programs, it gains the ability to continuously adapt.



The goal isn't to redesign the organization once.

It's to build a continuously adapting organization.

CHAPTER 4

A Continuously Adapting Organization

Building a continuously adapting organization can sound like an impossible undertaking. **It isn't.**

Organizations have spent decades building the knowledge required to understand work. It already exists across enterprise systems, documents, decisions, outcomes, and the experience of people doing the work every day.

They simply haven't connected it.

But the window is narrowing. Companies are redesigning roles and automating work before capturing how their best people create value. As roles change and experienced people leave, critical organizational knowledge can disappear before it is ever understood or preserved.

We've seen this pattern before.

The internet didn't become valuable because more information was created. It became valuable because information was connected, organized, and made understandable. The same transition is now happening inside the enterprise.

Every hiring decision.

Every promotion.

Every project.

Every learning investment.

Every business outcome.

Strengthens the organization's understanding of itself.

The objective isn't to create a static understanding of work. It's to build one that evolves with every decision.

The challenge isn't collecting more information.

It's turning what the organization already knows into an understanding that evolves as the work does.

CHAPTER 5

Turning Understanding into Competitive Advantage

The greatest value of this understanding is not that it helps organizations look backward.

It helps them prepare for what's next.

Organizations can translate strategy into the work it requires, determine which capabilities they have and need, and decide whether to hire, develop, redeploy, redesign, augment, or automate. They can align hiring, learning, mobility, workforce planning, and automation around the same understanding of the work.

Organizations that build this capability will move faster, put people where they can create more value, invest in the right capabilities, and adopt AI with greater confidence.

Those that do not will make expensive workforce decisions using fragmented information. They risk automating the wrong work, losing critical capabilities, hiring for roles already changing, and investing in learning that never improves performance.

The better an organization understands itself...
...the better it can shape its future workforce.

CHAPTER 6

Building the Foundation

Understanding work doesn't require organizations to replace the systems they've spent decades implementing. It requires a new layer that connects them and builds a living, company-specific model of the work required by the strategy, the capabilities available to perform it, and the decisions and outcomes that follow.

For that layer to become part of the modern enterprise, it must:

- Connect existing systems, documents, decisions, outcomes, and institutional knowledge.
- Understand the relationships among work, people, capabilities, and business results.
- Evolve continuously as work changes, decisions are made, and outcomes become known.
- Provide shared context to leaders, employees, applications, and AI agents.
- Remain secure, explainable, governed, and scalable enough for consequential enterprise decisions.
- The goal is not another destination for data. It is shared intelligence that improves every decision built upon it.

**Don't replace the
systems that run your
business.**

*Build the understanding
they were never designed
to create.*

CHAPTER 7

The Next Chapter

The shift described in this paper has already begun. Organizations are moving beyond asking AI to summarize information. They're beginning to ask AI agents to reason, recommend, and eventually act on behalf of the business.

That changes everything.

For the first time, organizations must decide who – or what – should do the work, and how people and AI agents should work together. Without that shared understanding, those decisions are built on fragmented information spread across systems, documents, conversations, and institutional knowledge.

That may be enough to produce an intelligent answer.
But it is not enough to support a consequential workforce decision.

**Consequential workforce decisions
require more than intelligent answers.**

*They require context.
They require consistency.
They require explainability.
They require provenance.
They require auditability.*

As organizations increasingly rely on AI to help shape hiring, development, automation, organizational design, and workforce planning, the quality of those decisions will depend on the quality of the understanding beneath them.

The objective is not to automate the most work. It is to make the best decisions about what should remain human, what should change, and where people and AI create more value together.

The future won't belong to organizations with the most AI.

It will belong to organizations that best understand their work.

Why We Built Workerbee

We built Workerbee around a simple belief: AI is changing the work, but companies still have to decide who—or what—should do it.

Workerbee is the AI operating system for workforce decisions. It builds a living model of a company's work and workforce, giving leaders the company-specific understanding they need to make better decisions about hiring, development, redeployment, role redesign, augmentation, and automation. That is the foundation of the continuously adapting organization.

Building it requires connecting enterprise information, preserving the context behind decisions, learning from outcomes, and making that understanding available at scale to people, applications, and AI agents.

We are working with teams across Google Cloud and Google DeepMind on the infrastructure required to make that continuously evolving understanding practical for the modern enterprise.

If your organization is deciding which work should remain human, become agent-assisted, or be automated, join the conversation or request a workforce decision readiness session.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Heiko Roth'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of 'Heiko' and 'Roth' being capitalized and prominent.

Heiko Roth
Founder & CEO
Workerbee

Continue the conversation

workerbee.ai/working-papers