

COMMENT & OPINION

EIGHTFOLD AI

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AI for Talent: How Talent Leaders Can Spot the Real Thing?

In every industry, venture capitalists are betting on artificial intelligence to transform business.

This is just as true in the workforce-management/talent field. The way people are hired and managed is being transformed by AI. In the process, talent leaders are bombarded with emails and calls from suppliers offering “AI.” In most cases, these technologies are not particularly intelligent.

But what does AI look like as it applies to talent? How can you spot it? Let me offer some suggestions:

Data. A true AI platform can involve profiles of as many as 1.5 billion people, representing much of the working world. These people encapsulate 1.4 million skills and more than 800,000 job titles. Using neural networks, this data enables talent leaders to learn from thousands of career histories that you would not be able to without this data.

Potential. True AI in the talent field allows you to hire, promote, move someone internally, find projects for people, find mentors for people -- all based on people’s skills, their potential, and their interests.

Go back to that data I talked about above. With enough data and deep neural networks, you can know who might succeed your departing or retiring directors, managers, vice presidents, and so on, not based on who knows who or who meets who in the lunchroom or happy hour. AI has seen so many profiles of so many careers, that it shows you who has the potential based on their skills and experience, even if they’re in a different department or location from the open role. Or, even if they are a contingent or contract employee. This cannot be done with outdated keyword searches or informal systems that are fraught with bias.

Adjacent skills. The AI shows your recruiters, human resources professionals, and hiring managers how hiring and promotion based on “adjacent skills” opens up opportunities for people, especially from underrepresented groups. For example, someone who knows Python may be able to learn TensorFlow or Django.

A consultant I work with named Josh Bersin likes to give the example of cybersecurity. He notes that cybersecurity specialists are very much like financial auditors. They dig around and find anomalies. So someone might be a financial auditor and have adjacent skills that make them ripe for being a cybersecurity employee. Only AI can show your talent team the capabilities needed for each role, and dynamically update those capabilities as business changes.

Employee self-service. Employees are at the hub of an AI platform. Here's how such a platform works:

The platform automatically fills in the skills that employees have, based on their current and past roles. The AI technology that's used in a career hub might know, for example, that an experienced designer is likely to know Lightroom. That designer has a profile already started for them.

Then, employees round out their profiles by adding any skills that aren't already listed. Employees then indicate the role they'd love to have next; moving from "designer" to "creative director," for example. The career hub shows the employee what skills are required in that new director role. It also shows the employee courses they could take to build their portfolio for that new role. Plus, it shows them mentors. These are people who've both agreed to serve as mentors, and whose expertise complements the employee's career aspirations. Finally, the career hub also shows employees projects they can take on internally (rather than having their company go out to a temp firm or gig-work platform).

Employers benefit by getting visibility into what each employee is capable of, so they can create opportunities to help their employees advance their careers. Turnover decreases as people look for jobs internally rather than externally. One telecommunications company saw attrition go down 40 percent in a year using this kind of technology.

Diversity and inclusion. AI should be built from the ground up to include, not exclude, people. Rather than exacerbate bias, it should be designed to reduce it.

As an example, take a job candidate who did not attend a well-known university, or attend college at all, for financial reasons. But, they have every bit the capability and potential of a job candidate who did earn a degree. AI helps companies focus on the skills the degree suggests someone has, not the piece of paper itself. Hiring, promotion, and other decisions are made based on people's skills, their potential, and their interests, not who they know. This also helps put people on equal footing regardless of their location.

AI also allows companies to see how eliminating certain job requirements changes the demographic pipeline for a given job. Perhaps 90 percent of a company's pipeline for a given job is male. Your recruiters or hiring managers can take a look at the requirements you've laid out in the role. Is the university degree or the master's degree you said is "required" really necessary, or are you looking for the skills and experience and knowledge regardless of how someone earned that skills, experience, and knowledge?

If your team is using a platform with a massive amount of data, and the ability to hire and manage people based on potential, adjacent skills, and employee self-service, while reducing bias, it very well may be an AI platform.

With 6000+ research citations, 50+ patents, 35+ peer-reviewed research publications, and the outstanding Ph.D. thesis award from UIUC for his Ph.D. thesis in Machine Learning, Eightfold AI Co-founder and CEO Ashutosh Garg is one of the world's experts in machine learning.



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