

# 03-25 Workshop: AI Implementation and Human Skills - The EPOCH Framework for Augmentation Strategy

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## Human Skills and AI Implementation: The EPOCH Framework and Augmentation Strategy

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**Speaker:** Speaker 1 (Name not specified in transcript)

**Venue/Event:** Professional workshop/conference (specific location not mentioned)

**Date:** March 2026

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### Overview of Key Themes

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The speaker delivered a comprehensive presentation on the relationship between artificial intelligence and human capabilities, introducing the EPOCH framework for understanding distinctly human skills that complement rather than compete with AI. The presentation challenged the predominant “substitution” approach to AI implementation, advocating instead for an “augmentation” strategy that enhances human capabilities. Drawing on labor market data analysis of approximately 19,000 tasks across nearly 1,000 occupations, the speaker demonstrated that jobs requiring uniquely human skills—empathy, creativity, relationship-building, and ethical judgment—are experiencing significant growth. The presentation also addressed critical gaps in education systems, the underutilization of retired professionals’ expertise, and the need for comprehensive complementary investments (education, infrastructure, regulations, accessibility) to ensure AI-generated wealth translates into broad societal welfare.

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### Key Points

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## The EPOCH Framework: Measuring Distinctly Human Skills

The research team developed a framework categorizing five distinctly human skill dimensions:

- **Empathy** - Understanding context and relating to small data inference
- **Presence** - Developing relationships, networking, and building trust
- **Openness** - Receptivity to new ideas and perspectives
- **Creativity** - Generating novel solutions and extrapolations
- **Hope** - Maintaining vision and commitment despite low probability of success

Using O\*NET data spanning 15 years through 2014, the team scored nearly 1,000 occupations across these dimensions. The framework demonstrated strong predictive power: of 8.5 million jobs created in the U.S. between 2015-2024, 7.5 million had EPOCH scores above 80%, explaining approximately 90% of actual job growth.

## The Limitation of Purely Data-Driven Decision Making

The speaker argued that humanity's greatest decisions—such as abolishing slavery and establishing women's suffrage—were made by deliberately contradicting statistical patterns in historical data. These decisions reflected values like equity and justice that exist outside purely rational optimization, demonstrating that the best human decisions involve denying what data alone would suggest.

## Three Approaches to AI Implementation

Using the metaphor of playing tennis against Rafael Nadal, the speaker outlined three strategic approaches:

1. **Market Solution** - Outsourcing the problem entirely to someone else
2. **Substitution/Bazooka Mode** - Replacing human capability with technology that achieves objectives but removes the human element
3. **Augmentation** - Using AI to improve existing human capabilities and performance

The speaker warned that organizations are currently operating in "bazooka mode," focusing on worker substitution and cost reduction. While this strategy will likely succeed financially in the short term, it creates a self-reinforcing cycle preventing exploration of better augmentation alternatives.

## Labor Market Impact: Risk vs. Augmentation

The research identified two key metrics:

- **Risk:** Jobs where 85% or more of tasks could be eliminated by AI (affecting approximately 5-7 million workers in the U.S., compared to a labor force of 170 million)
- **Augmentation:** Jobs where AI substitutes non-core but essential tasks, increasing productivity by an estimated 20% (benefiting 80-100 million workers)

Notably, education level showed less correlation with job security than EPOCH skills, challenging conventional wisdom about the protective value of advanced degrees.

## Historical Lessons from Automobile Adoption

The speaker detailed five critical investments that enabled successful automobile adoption in the early 20th century:

1. **Complementary Skills Education** - Teaching people to drive rather than ride horses
2. **Infrastructure and Capital** - Building roads and making them publicly accessible
3. **Norms and Regulations** - Establishing traffic laws, signage, and enforcement mechanisms
4. **Access and Affordability** - Creating financing systems and secondary markets
5. **Labor Standards** - Ford's introduction of the 40-hour work week and doubled minimum wages

Current internet and AI deployment has fallen short on all these dimensions, with insufficient investment in responsible use education, reliance on privacy-trading barter systems, inadequate regulations, and deteriorating labor standards.

## The "Acceptable Level of Pain" Phenomenon

Using call centers as an example, the speaker described how industries maintain a constant "acceptable level of pain" for customers. When AI substitution occurs, companies maximize profits while keeping customer experience equally poor, representing a missed opportunity to create better products and experiences through reinvestment of efficiency gains.

## The Crisis in Education Systems

The speaker argued that current education systems actively suppress natural human capacities that make us exceptional. Formal schooling often extinguishes curiosity and creative thinking through rigid, authoritarian teaching methods that prioritize rote answers over critical inquiry. Additionally, retired professionals with 40 years of potential mentorship capacity remain unutilized, representing enormous wasted human capital.

## Responsible AI Use: Personality Specification

The speaker emphasized specifying the “personality” or role when using AI tools. Unlike human interactions where roles are clear (parent, spouse, friend), AI interactions lack context. Properly specifying ChatGPT’s role—such as an aggressive McKinsey interviewer—can transform AI from a replacement tool to a rehearsal tool.

## The Regulation Reality

The speaker provided a sobering assessment: countries leading AI development (US, China, UAE, Saudi Arabia) are not advocating for regulation, while those calling for oversight are losing the technological competition. Alternative approaches like industry-specific best practices and data openness requirements may be more feasible near-term solutions.

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## Key Quotes

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“Actually, we humans do not let the data ever speak for itself. And the best decision we have made as humankind is because we indeed denied the data.”

“The first person that decided not to produce something using slaves—What data point that person used? After thousands and thousands of years of us going to the next village and enslaving in the next village, the only statistical pattern that existed in the data is that the richer, the biggest, strongest empires had more slaves not less.”

“This technology is so extraordinary that I am going to be able to substitute workers. So it’s not like I might... I think we actually are going to make money by following the wrong strategy, almost for sure.”

“It’s almost like taking all the innovations that we have on the combustion engine and the motors of vehicles, and we make sure that they drive at 30 miles an hour, like they once did in '40. Why improve the product when you can actually have the exact same product?”

“Hope has two things: one is extrapolation and the other one is subjective beliefs... her definition of hope is thinking that something’s going to happen when the actual probability is zero.”

“‘To be used as to rehearse, not to replace.’ ...it’s okay to use the chat GPT to rehearse the therapy conversation you will have, not to replace it.”

“I remember my son had a curiosity that was extraordinary. He was three or four years old. He was curious about everything. He was totally curious. And then suddenly he lost it. That coincides exactly with the time when he enters school.”

“There’s a difference between aging and longevity. And, it’s so interesting that

we use the word aging as opposed to call this longevity. Because longevity requires dignity. Longevity is aging with dignity.”

“It’s not guaranteed that the wealth that this technology is going to create is going to be transferred into welfare for all of us. I think our challenge, and we have the privilege to be able to teach and think about these issues. I invite you to think about how we can transform the wealth into welfare.”

“In the 30,000 people that die every single year in the United States, we know if the driver was tired or not... We know the attribution. And therefore for someone that has lost a loved one in an accident, okay, I imagine that understanding who is responsible for that death—It’s an important aspect of how we heal as humans.”

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## Action Points

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- 1. Evaluate Your Role Through the EPOCH Framework:** Assess your current job tasks against the five EPOCH dimensions (Empathy, Presence, Openness, Creativity, Hope) to identify which skills you’re currently utilizing and which may need development.
- 2. Shift from Substitution to Augmentation Mindset:** Organizations should evaluate their AI implementation strategies and pivot from cost-reduction through worker substitution toward enhancing human capabilities and improving product/service quality.
- 3. Invest in Developing Non-Automatable Skills:** Focus professional development on relationship-building, judgment, leadership, and creative problem-solving rather than purely technical or routine competencies. Recognize that education level alone is no longer the primary predictor of job security.
- 4. Specify AI Personality in Prompts:** When using AI tools, explicitly define the role, personality, and constraints you want the AI to adopt. Use AI as a rehearsal tool for important interactions rather than as a replacement for human engagement.
- 5. Challenge the “Acceptable Level of Pain” Standard:** Rather than using AI efficiency gains solely to reduce costs while maintaining poor customer experiences, reinvest savings into improving service quality and creating competitive differentiation.
- 6. Reform Educational Assessment Methods:** Move away from essays and written assignments that can be easily generated by AI. Instead, implement debate-based evaluations, presentations, and interactive formats that require critical thinking, real-time analysis, and peer engagement.
- 7. Leverage Retired Professionals as Educators:** Actively recruit retired business leaders, entrepreneurs, and subject matter experts to teach practical skills like

entrepreneurship, leadership, and project design to students, creating structures that value intergenerational wisdom.

8. **Invest in Complementary Education:** Develop comprehensive training programs that teach employees and users how to effectively and responsibly use AI tools, including proper prompting techniques and understanding AI's limitations.
9. **Establish Industry-Specific AI Norms:** Rather than waiting for government regulation, convene industry groups and academic-private sector partnerships to establish best practices for AI use, focusing on principles like transparency, data openness, and ethical deployment.
10. **Incorporate Ethical Considerations Beyond Data:** When making decisions, consciously consider values like equity, justice, and long-term human welfare that may contradict short-term data optimization.
11. **Request Access to Research Data:** Contact the speaker or Isabella to obtain the 2014 dataset, which is being made publicly available, and express interest in accessing updated data as permissions are secured.
12. **Protect Human Dignity in Optimization:** Ensure that AI-driven optimization of work processes considers worker dignity and well-being, not just efficiency metrics. Resist treating employees as interchangeable "widgets."