Capability for Change

AI Impacts Change Management

WEBINAR

Introduction

This paper addresses two major themes concerning the integration of artificial intelligence into change management practice: firstly, the impact on our roles as change management professionals, and secondly, the impact on the skills we require to remain effective.

I conclude with practical activities, techniques and steps that you can take to help you change your role and build your skills. To ensure you can apply the techniques I have included links to them in this paper. Each technique is a neurohack, which is a short video explaining how to use the brain-smart technique, along with checklists, guidance notes and templates to enable you to apply what you are watching. These techniques are available via the **ChangeabilityPro® platform**, which is an online training and coaching service. Click on any of the links to set up a free guest membership and access up to 3 neurohacks and 3 resources.

The Human Factor in AI Adoption

Are we ready to change our ways of working?

- AI technology may be moving at light speed, but people are not. And that disconnect is one of the main issues facing companies trying to adopt AI. This year 93% pointed to human issues such as culture and change management as the key challenge to data and AI adoption—the highest-ever percentage in this survey. How executives are thinking about AI heading into 2026

- "One of the reasons we see the failures that we do is under-investment in upskilling and retraining and actually changing workflows with research showing that 74% of 1,000 global organizations surveyed had not shown tangible value from AI investments. The report stresses: "Organizations that are most successful are spending at least as much in terms of resources and time on the change management and development as they did on the deployment." OECD Report on how companies struggle to achieve and scale value of AI

Recent research, particularly from the Harvard Business Review, highlights a critical insight: technology will always move faster than individuals can adapt. The primary barrier to extracting value from AI investments is not technological capability but human capacity. People require time to assimilate changes and build the motivation necessary to embrace new ways of working. This fundamental reality means that humans will always operate at a slower pace than machines.

This just adds to the constant pressure to "catch-up" that comes from the speed and the volume of change taking place in so many organisations. A key element of being a change professional is providing coping mechanisms that support people through more than a single change, creating an environment for them to thrive in ambiguity, uncertainty and anxiety.

Successful organisations recognise this challenge and invest substantial resources in helping their workforce adapt and develop alongside AI functionality. Whether dealing with generative AI that creates content or agentic AI that can autonomously complete tasks within defined parameters, organisations must carefully consider how to facilitate these transitions. Fundamentally, we need change management to change anything—including ourselves.

Distinguishing Human and Machine Capabilities

Building upon established thinking in this area, there exists a clear distinction between tasks ideally suited to humans and those better handled by machines. Human tasks centre on people-focused activities: relationship building, creativity, imagination, intuition, curiosity and generating new ideas. Humans possess emotional intelligence—though not everyone develops it to high levels—and the capacity for moral and ethical judgement. These are choices we can consciously apply to our work.

Balancing tasks

Human tasks

- Relationships – creating, maintaining and using relationships to create value
- Creativity – using imagination, intuition and curiosity
- Using emotional intelligence to select and apply appropriate behaviours
- Defining and applying morality and ethics

AI tasks

- Repetitive tasks defined in detail with logical sequence
- Continuous monitoring and application of quality criteria without variation based on exhaustion or emotion
- Applying pre-defined logic to identify tasks and take decisions
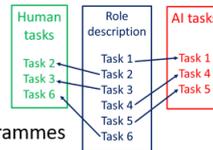- Analysis of vast amounts of information

Conversely, AI excels at tasks requiring the processing of vast amounts of information. Machines perform repetitive tasks with logical sequences without fatigue, maintaining consistent quality without variation, exhaustion or emotional interference. AI can apply predefined logic repeatedly, use established criteria for decision-making, and analyse enormous datasets with remarkable speed.

This distinction provides a useful framework for evaluating our professional roles. Change management practitioners should examine their role descriptions and identify which tasks are better suited to human capabilities and which could be delegated to AI tools.

Practical Application: The Business Change Manager Role

To demonstrate how AI is impacting change roles, I have used a current job advertisement for a business change manager in the United Kingdom. The role requires professionals to define and manage a portfolio of strategic, cross-functional transformation programmes. Whilst AI could identify all programmes and analyse vast sources of information across the organisation, managing these programmes—understanding their interdependencies, scope and impact on individuals—remains fundamentally a human task.

Sharing responsibilities

Human tasks
Task 2
Task 3
Task 6

Role description
Task 1
Task 2
Task 3
Task 4
Task 5
Task 6

AI tasks
Task 1
Task 4
Task 5

- Define and manage a portfolio of strategic, cross-functional transformation programmes
- Conduct in-depth analysis of organisational inefficiencies
- Develop data-driven recommendations to improve performance against global KPIs
- Develop and apply comprehensive programme governance
- Track progress, managing dependencies, and adapt plans in response to evolving business needs
- Identify, assess, and mitigate risks and barriers to successful transformation delivery, ensuring momentum and stakeholder alignment
- Drive continuous improvement across processes, systems, tools, and organisational ways of working
- Develop high-quality communication and reporting materials to clearly articulate progress, outcomes, risks, and decisions to stakeholders at all levels
- Ensure transformation initiatives deliver measurable improvements in operational efficiency, customer experience, innovation, and employee wellbeing

Similarly, conducting in-depth analysis of organisational inefficiencies could leverage AI by feeding organisational data and reports into analytical tools. Developing data-driven recommendations would certainly benefit from AI assistance, though these recommendations might need tempering through human understanding of organisational politics and culture.

Programme governance presents another interesting division of labour. Generative AI tools can identify best practice in governance and control management, even creating frameworks and documentation. However, applying these frameworks—persuading and encouraging people to follow processes—remains distinctly human work.

Tracking progress, identifying dependencies and adapting plans can certainly involve AI, but understanding evolving business needs from political and cultural perspectives requires human judgement. Whilst AI can identify risks, conduct assessments and identify barriers to transformation delivery, creating momentum and stakeholder alignment demands human relationship-building and emotional intelligence. Understanding who the most persuasive people in the organisation are and how to engage and train them in making change happen cannot be fully automated.

Communications present an interesting hybrid area. AI can now generate high-quality communications when prompted to take specific stakeholder perspectives, and can develop communication plans. However, assessing whether changes are genuinely improving the business situation and understanding how people feel about changes requires human insight.

This analysis, based on practical experience with current AI tools illustrates that practitioners could delegate significantly more work to AI, thereby creating time to properly build and deepen relationships with stakeholders, becoming more effective persuaders and motivators.

Evolution of Professional Roles

Six months ago, creating comprehensive transformational plans involved manually working out linkages between initiatives and determining optimal sequencing, which is work that I have always prided myself on my ability to do.

Capability for Change

Plot how your role is evolving

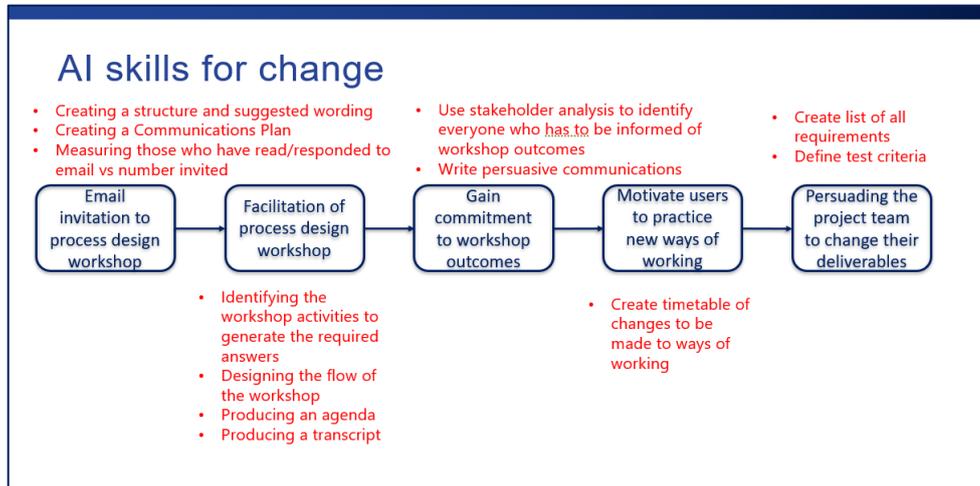| My role 6 months ago	My role now
Creating plans of multiple, interdependent change initiatives and manually identify inter-dependencies	AI assimilates multiple initiatives into plans, I analyse plans and converse with AI to identify the inter-dependencies
	Earlier meetings with all those involved to break deadlock, remove duplications
Read multiple reports and make notes to add to presentations	AI summarises multiple reports and develop new content
Take notes during meeting, type up summary and action points	AI creates transcript, sentiment analysis and action points

Today, the ease of use of many generative AI tools means I can now input substantial data into AI systems to assimilate different organisational changes. This creates opportunities to analyse and interrogate AI-generated plans through conversational interfaces. For instance, one might ask AI to identify the most significant interdependencies, suggest reordering to avoid bottlenecks where one initiative's outputs become another's inputs, or search for duplications and gaps based on scope information.

This transformation enables earlier and more frequent meetings with initiative leaders to break deadlocks and remove duplications. The human aspect—engaging with people to resolve issues collaboratively—now receives much greater attention. Reading reports has evolved from comprehensive manual review to asking AI to search for specific data, then requesting suggestions for additional information sources. This provides inputs for developing new content whilst AI handles much of the summarising work.

Meeting management has similarly transformed. Using AI transcription for sentiment analysis and action point identification saves considerable time whilst ensuring routine capture of information that can be fed back into planning systems. This creates a virtuous cycle where conversations with AI become more frequent and information-rich.
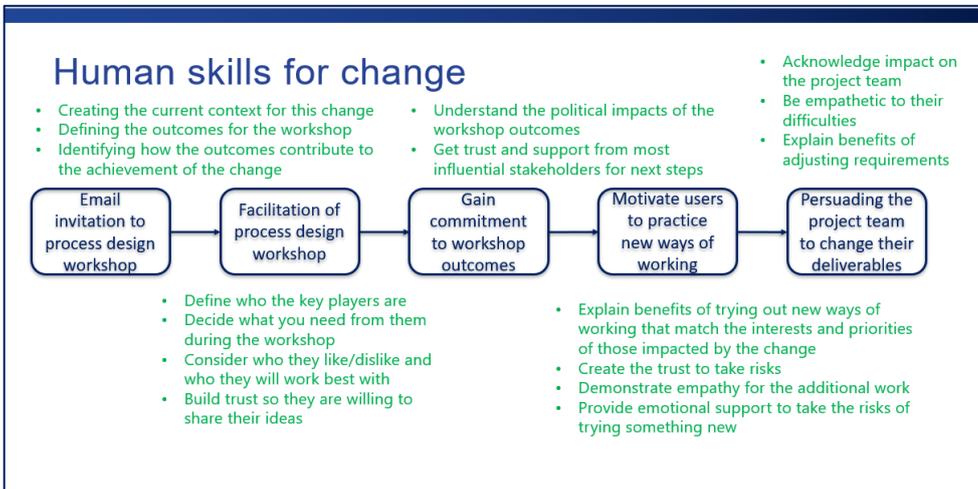
Workflow Analysis: Process Redesign Example

AI skills for change

- Creating a structure and suggested wording
- Creating a Communications Plan
- Measuring those who have read/responded to email vs number invited

- Use stakeholder analysis to identify everyone who has to be informed of workshop outcomes
- Write persuasive communications

- Create list of all requirements
- Define test criteria

| Email invitation to process design workshop | → | Facilitation of process design workshop | → | Gain commitment to workshop outcomes | → | Motivate users to practice new ways of working | → | Persuading the project team to change their deliverables |

- Identifying the workshop activities to generate the required answers
- Designing the flow of the workshop
- Producing an agenda
- Producing a transcript

- Create timetable of changes to be made to ways of working

A detailed workflow analysis demonstrates the practical division between human and machine contributions. Consider a standard change management scenario: redesigning processes. The workflow typically involves emailing people to invite them to a process design workshop, facilitating that workshop, achieving outcomes, gaining senior commitment to those outcomes, motivating users to define and practise new ways of working, and persuading the project team to update their deliverables.

AI can handle substantial elements of this workflow: structuring emails, creating communications plans, tracking responses against invitations, and even facilitating workshops. Despite extensive facilitation experience, practitioners find that providing AI with desired outcomes and contextual information generates comprehensive workshop agendas complete with activities, flow and timings. AI can produce transcripts from recorded sessions or even from practitioners reading aloud flip chart notes during coffee breaks.

For gaining commitment, AI provides stakeholder analysis, writes persuasive communications, creates timetables for implementing new ways of working, and generates requirement lists with test criteria for project team deliverables.

Human skills for change

- Creating the current context for this change
- Defining the outcomes for the workshop
- Identifying how the outcomes contribute to the achievement of the change

- Understand the political impacts of the workshop outcomes
- Get trust and support from most influential stakeholders for next steps

- Acknowledge impact on the project team
- Be empathetic to their difficulties
- Explain benefits of adjusting requirements

Email invitation to process design workshop → Facilitation of process design workshop → Gain commitment to workshop outcomes → Motivate users to practice new ways of working → Persuading the project team to change their deliverables

- Define who the key players are
- Decide what you need from them during the workshop
- Consider who they like/dislike and who they will work best with
- Build trust so they are willing to share their ideas

- Explain benefits of trying out new ways of working that match the interests and priorities of those impacted by the change
- Create the trust to take risks
- Demonstrate empathy for the additional work
- Provide emotional support to take the risks of trying something new
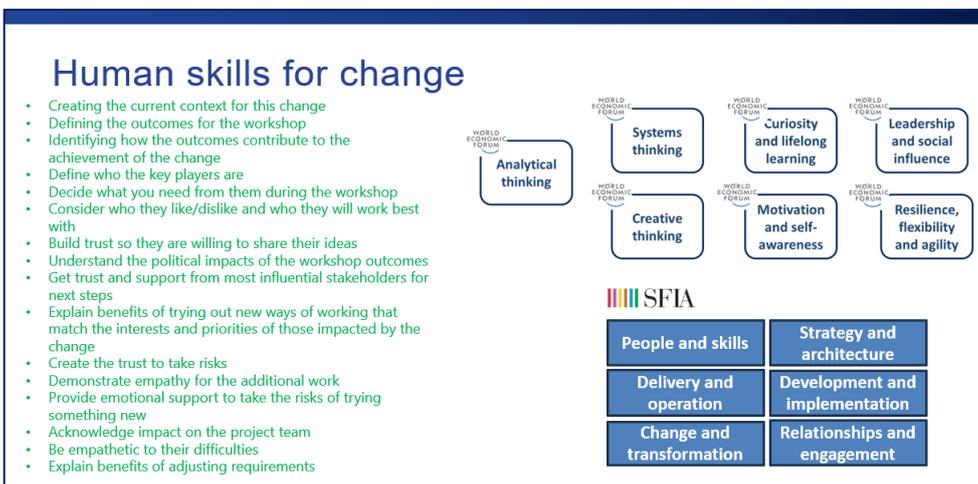
However, the human contribution remains crucial. Whilst AI might create email wording, humans must determine the context for change, workshop outcomes and how these fit within broader change objectives. In facilitation, humans define key players, understand relationships and dynamics, and build the trust necessary for people to share ideas openly.

Gaining commitment to workshop outcomes requires human understanding of political impacts and the ability to secure trust and support from influential stakeholders. Motivating users to practise new ways of working involves explaining benefits, answering "What's in it for me?" questions, persuading people to experiment with approaches matching their interests, creating trust for risk-taking, demonstrating empathy for additional workload, and providing emotional support.

Persuading project teams to modify deliverables requires acknowledging impact as a human being, empathising with the difficulty this creates, and persuasively explaining the benefits of adjusting requirements.

Essential Skills for the Future

Human skills for change

- Creating the current context for this change
- Defining the outcomes for the workshop
- Identifying how the outcomes contribute to the achievement of the change
- Define who the key players are
- Decide what you need from them during the workshop
- Consider who they like/dislike and who they will work best with
- Build trust so they are willing to share their ideas
- Understand the political impacts of the workshop outcomes
- Get trust and support from most influential stakeholders for next steps
- Explain benefits of trying out new ways of working that match the interests and priorities of those impacted by the change
- Create the trust to take risks
- Demonstrate empathy for the additional work
- Provide emotional support to take the risks of trying something new
- Acknowledge impact on the project team
- Be empathetic to their difficulties
- Explain benefits of adjusting requirements

Analytical thinking

Systems thinking

Creative thinking

Curiosity and lifelong learning

Motivation and self-awareness

Leadership and social influence

Resilience, flexibility and agility

SFIA

People and skills	Strategy and architecture
Delivery and operation	Development and implementation
Change and transformation	Relationships and engagement

Several authoritative sources provide guidance on critical future skills. The World Economic Forum's skills framework for 2030 emphasises curiosity and lifelong learning, leadership and social influence, and self-awareness as a core element of emotional intelligence. The Skills Framework for the Information Age highlights not only change and transformation but critically emphasises relationships, engagement, and people skills.

Recent research from McKinsey, published in the Wall Street Journal, notes that professionals need both technical fluency (subject matter expertise) and human capabilities. For AI contexts, practitioners must frame problems, interpret AI outputs, manage expectations, and know when to escalate decisions. Job applications should now emphasise AI fluency or AI literacy alongside traditional competencies.

Are we ready to upskill?

- These include technical fluency as well as capabilities specific to human-AI interaction: framing problems, overseeing AI outputs, interpreting results, managing exceptions and knowing when to escalate decisions. https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/media-center/human-skills-will-matter-more-than-ever-in-the-age-of-ai
- Levels of human adaptability is the new benchmark for learning . It requires the ability to ask the right questions, to know when to rely on AI (and when to press pause), and to foresee impacts beyond the immediate. Crucially, fluency necessitates the development of adaptive skills, including judgment, curiosity, flexibility, and risk tolerance. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/11/oecd-ai-capability-indicators-technical-report_d3762d1a/9cdb3dd1-en.pdf

---

The OECD discusses human adaptability as the new benchmark for learning. Professionals need to know what questions to ask, when to rely on AI, and when to pause. Crucially, fluency necessitates developing adaptive skills including judgement, curiosity, flexibility and risk tolerance. These findings align with those from the World Economic Forum and Skills Framework for the Information Age—human skills become increasingly important in an AI-augmented workplace.

Personal Development Techniques

I wanted to include in this note practical techniques to support your professional adaptation.

To consider how your role might change as you adopt more AI tools and push more of your repetitive work towards AI, use this technique for **designing your role**.

The **Corporate Profile technique** helps define you decide how these changes are impacting how you view your longer term career. It will challenge you to identify how a role involving more relationship building, data analysis and insights, visioning and context identification makes you feel. **Use this technique** to understand how changes brought about by AI make you feel.

Completion of your corporate profile gives you the opportunity to consider how your evolving role fits with your values, your contribution to your organisation, career progression and work-life balance. Creating (and regular reviews of your corporate profile prompts you to reflect on what skills to develop.

Corporate profile technique

SECTION 1: WHERE YOU ARE NOW
Your Current Role and Purpose
Your Current Values and Priorities
Your Current Achievements and Strengths

SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF CHANGE
How Will Changes Affect You?
The Changes Happening in Your Organisation
Impact on Your Current Role – use WAITE model
Your Feelings About the Change
Career Opportunities and Threats from Change

SECTION 3: WHERE YOU WANT TO GO NEXT
Define Your Future Vision
Your Career Aspirations
Your Future Values and Priorities

SECTION 4: BRIDGING THE GAP
From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be
Skills Gap Analysis
Experience and Knowledge Gaps
Leveraging Organisational Changes
Your Current Assets and Resources
Building Your Assets for the Future

The WAITE technique (Ways of working, Abilities, Information, Tasks and Emphasis) provides another valuable framework. This is explained in the technique called **Designing your role**. Applying this to any workflow that you are responsible for as a change practitioner including facilitating a workshop prompts consideration of tasks humans must perform. Identifying the tasks helps you identify the required information, necessary skills and abilities, and crucially, the emphasis: feelings, attitudes and behaviours to bring to your work.

These attitudes and behaviours align to the abilities including curiosity and social influence identified by the World Economic Forum. It prompts you to consider how you continue to develop your interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.

Define the detail

- The attitude, feelings and behaviours that this person brings to their work.
- Explains what they need to pay attention to and prioritise.

- Information that the person carrying out the tasks needs to be able to access.
- This is not just knowledge that they must 'know' but includes information that they need to know where to find.

Emphasis   **Abilities**

Ways of working
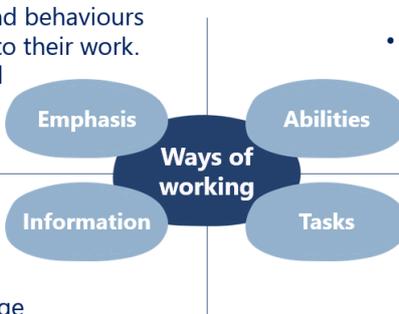
Information   **Tasks**

- Skills and competencies that this person needs to be able to carry out the tasks effectively.

- Tasks that this role is responsible for.
- Ideally each task will be broken down to a simple, stand-alone activity

Grief and Career Transformation

My recent coaching experiences reveal the profound emotional impact of the changes triggered by greater adoption of AI.

One individual in a finance function, who had built their professional identity on financial acumen earned through long term commitment to gaining qualifications faced multiple changes from an incoming enterprise platform. They were losing data input and manual entry work, meaning no more manipulating spreadsheets. Instead, they would use platform data and were expected to analyse rather than input information.

Empathising with loss technique

- Recognise changes trigger feelings of loss and grief
- Loss triggered by realisation skills and experience developed to date might not be enough
- Anxiety and fear generated by lack of certainty about the future
- Create a psychologically safe space where people can share these feelings
  - Professor William Bridges captured this in his 3 step model of transition: Endings; Neutral Zone; New Beginning
  - Kubler-Ross recognised how awareness of change creates shock

This required higher-level thinking skills: curiosity, analytical capability, innovation and connecting dots to answer questions about what data reveals, who needs to know, and how information might reshape service offerings, products and pricing models. Additionally, they needed to mentor and coach colleagues upstream who input data that flows through to finance, helping them understand why accurate information entry matters.

This person was grieving what they believed their career path would be and their concept of professionalism versus what they were now expected to become. The key realisation is that organisations are making enormous asks of their people: to move up the complexity scale, understand more strategic contexts, connect dots more effectively, become more questioning yet decisive, and operate at greater pace.

This individual experienced deep distress, mourning the loss of their anticipated career trajectory. They recognised these changes were not unique to their organisation but challenged their entire profession, raising fundamental questions about professional identity.

Before discussing the opportunities, these changes might create, the essential response was empathy for their sense of loss and anger, the feeling that previously valued skills had become insufficient and that work now demanded unprecedented levels of cognitive effort.

These changes are coming for every role. As change management professionals, we are leading organisational transformations, so we must prepare for similar emotional impacts throughout our organisations.

A helpful approach to begin the conversation about concerns that people have as their roles change is the **Feel the pain** technique.

Practical Recommendations

The tools and frameworks discussed here help practitioners consider how AI might change their work whilst simultaneously providing examples for helping others navigate similar transitions. Success requires several commitments.

Firstly, as change practitioners I believe we must be willing to stop doing some activities we have always performed. Secondly, we must recognise that learning and personal development cannot remain desk-side activities but must be integrated continuously into our professional practice. The mythical "when things quieten down" moment for upskilling never arrives. Instead, we must proactively schedule development time.

What does this development look like? Practical implementation might include booking specific courses months in advance, scheduling dedicated personal development periods throughout the year, and establishing regular private time. For example, I find that every few weeks, usually on a Saturday morning, I need to put aside some time for "catching up with myself" and take time for reading, listening to webinar recordings, reflecting on knowledge gaps, and practising new skills.

This represents a significant commitment to my personal development, but I do not see an alternative. The world is changing rapidly, and if I don't keep myself up to speed on changes in how organisations are using technology and what I can offer in terms of skills and values, no-one else is going to do it for me.

Essential Skill Areas
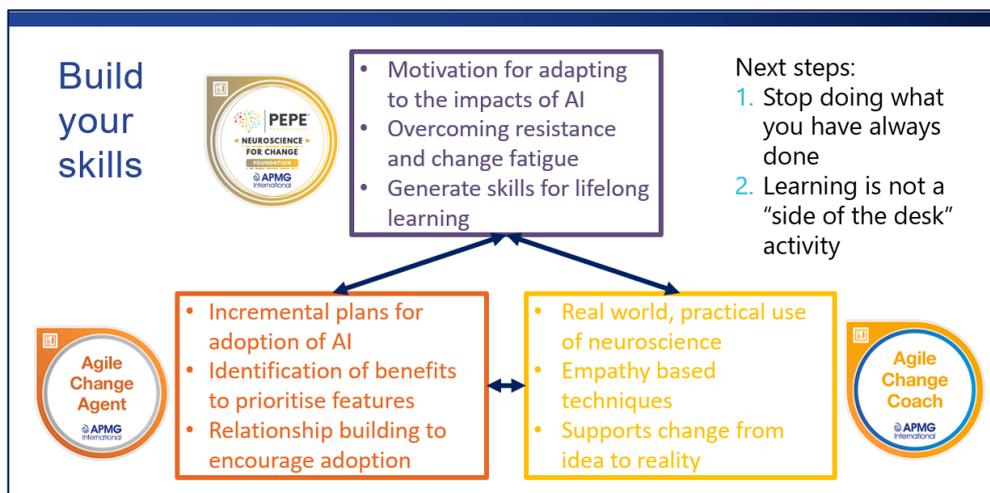
Three skill areas are vital for future success.

1. Understanding neuroscience, particularly regarding motivation, overcoming resistance and generating lifelong learning capabilities provides foundational knowledge.
2. Personal development planning benefits from incremental planning techniques, so an understanding of the Agile Change roadmap is particularly helpful.

3. Persuasion and empathy techniques prove crucial in this evolving professional landscape, along with the willingness to be curious, ask lots of questions and challenge my own thinking and seek new ways of doing things.

Use these courses to help develop your skills:

1. **Neuroscience for Change Course** – Provides brain-smart techniques for the motivation for adapting to the impacts of AI and techniques for overcoming resistance and change fatigue. Crucially, it shows how we can create an environment that generates skills for lifelong learning.

2. **Agile Change Agent Course** - Focuses on planning and benefits identification and the relationship building that encourages adoption of change. This agile approach makes perfect sense for the level of uncertainty that AI brings, as things are moving so fast. Planning changes incrementally and iteratively, delivering something as soon as you can while you have certainty, then building on it and taking into account how things have changed.

3. **Agile Change Coach Course** - Provides real-world practical application of neuroscience, empathy-based techniques where we take into account how the brain works and how people will be feeling and why they're impacted the way they are. These techniques enable us to support change from idea to reality.

Conclusion

The transformation underway in change management demands both technological fluency and enhanced human capabilities. By thoughtfully considering which tasks to delegate to AI and which to reserve for human judgement and relationship-building, practitioners can position themselves effectively for continued professional relevance whilst helping their organisations successfully navigate the complex human dimensions of technological change.

As the pace of AI tool development increases, the opportunities for automation of an ever-broadening range of change management activities is possible. We can choose to be affected by this, or we can choose to direct this impact and re-design the expertise and services we provide to those going through change at work.

This is the time to invest in the development of our human skills - curiosity, empathy, vision-setting, and contextual understanding we will establish ourselves as an essential partner for AI transformation in our organisations.