

Boosting human skills to succeed in an AI world

As humans, we need to power up key capabilities and connections – now more than ever.

Technology, including AI automation and augmentation, is already reshaping how organisations get work done. Business leaders need to prepare their workforce for major changes and disruptions in the nature of work – what it is, how it's done, the skills and capabilities needed.

In the post-pandemic and hybrid-working world, authenticity, purpose, compassion, and connection have emerged as critical factors in employee engagement, well-being, innovation, agility and organisational success.

Boosting human skills and capabilities is more important, not less – social-creative and interpersonal abilities are crucial for thriving in an AI world, and for tackling increasingly complex problems.

Technology is transforming how businesses succeed – but AI is only part of a bigger story

AI is already impacting how L&D teams work – in a variety of ways and often not strategically

Driving more content is counterproductive if you really want to shift behaviour

The smart move is to leverage technology to power human skills to the next level

To thrive, humans need to be even more human, with ourselves and with each other

When we are connected to each other, a wider purpose, and ourselves we are better able to navigate the inherently uncertain world we occupy. To thrive, we need to be even more human.

What are the key human skills and capabilities and how can we power them to the next level?

Read on to discover...

1. What 'human skills and capabilities' are
2. The top 12 human capabilities – according to the latest insight and evidence
3. Seven factors to optimize 'human learning' – our RESPECT model
4. Examples of how top organizations are responding to the challenge

Connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship"

– Brene Brown



What are 'human skills & capabilities'?

Human capabilities are what makes us unique - how we are, how we think, how we relate to each other.

Human skills and capabilities are extraordinary. They help us be at our best in many different contexts, and are not specific to any particular job or organization. They can be valuable outside of work too! We consider 'soft skills' to be a subset of human skills.

In comparison, technical skills are job-specific knowledge and capabilities. They tend to focus on knowledge

and expertise, enabling employees to perform core tasks and meet the performance requirements associated with a particular role and/organization. Examples might be programming, engineering, accounting.

Whilst human skills and technical skills are both important in the workplace, they serve a different purpose and are often developed in different ways.

People with strong human skills can form deeper connections with colleagues and customers. This ultimately serves as a strong foundation for positive workplace performance... and are crucial for a more adaptive, inclusive and digital future.

– Harvard Business School

What's the difference between skills and capabilities?

Skills are the building blocks, which combine into higher order capabilities. For example, rapport building, active listening, and summarizing are three of the skills which combine to help develop a coaching capability.

The term 'capability' is literally a combination of 'capacity' and 'ability'.

Add confidence into the equation and you're away!

Capability = capacity + ability (skills) + confidence

To build and sustain capability you need enough of all three. Learning to drive is a capability and requires plenty of capacity (time and thinking space) especially at the start to build your many skills and confidence safely.

Capabilities only come to life when you use them, practice and refine them. Reading an article about presenting doesn't mean you are a skilled presenter. It takes time and space as well as the opportunity to learn from practice, experience, and progress.

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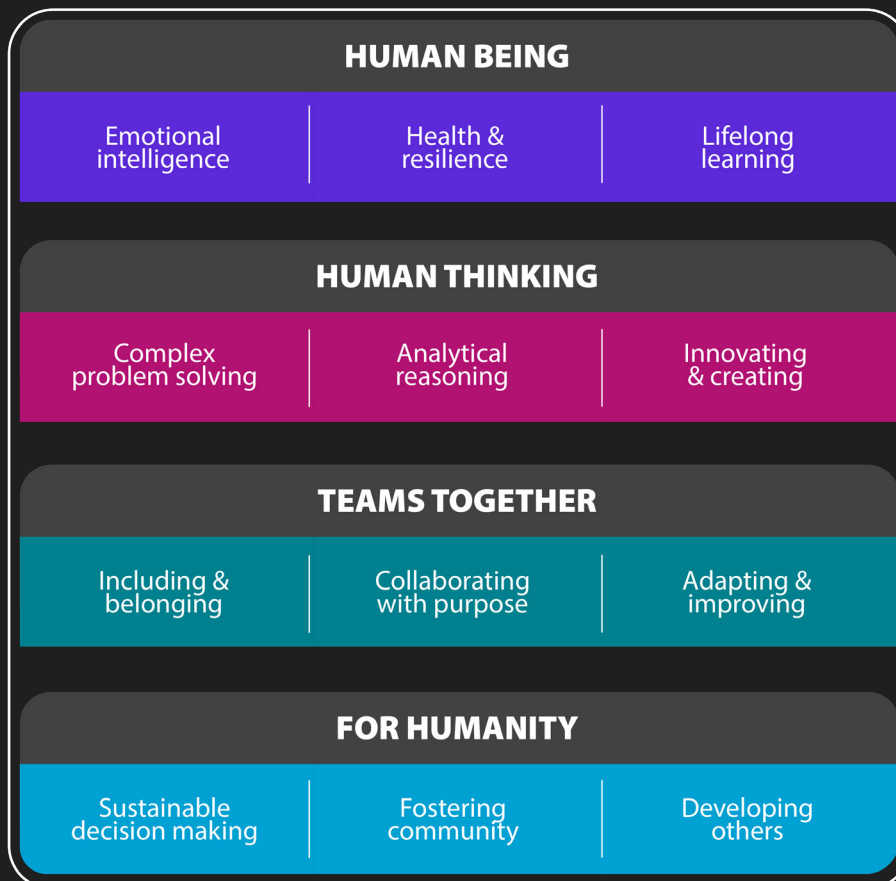
What are the top 12 human skills & capabilities?

As humans, we have the unique ability to think like humans, connect like humans, and meet our human needs – but what are the specific skills and capabilities we really need?

The Hemsley Insights Group (a team of external L&D practitioners, clients, and internal learning experts) reviewed the

latest evidence from research and L&D best practice and identified our top 12 human capabilities with 3-4 key skills associated with each.

Our framework deliberately covers four perspectives which together form the human experience in organisations – represented below.



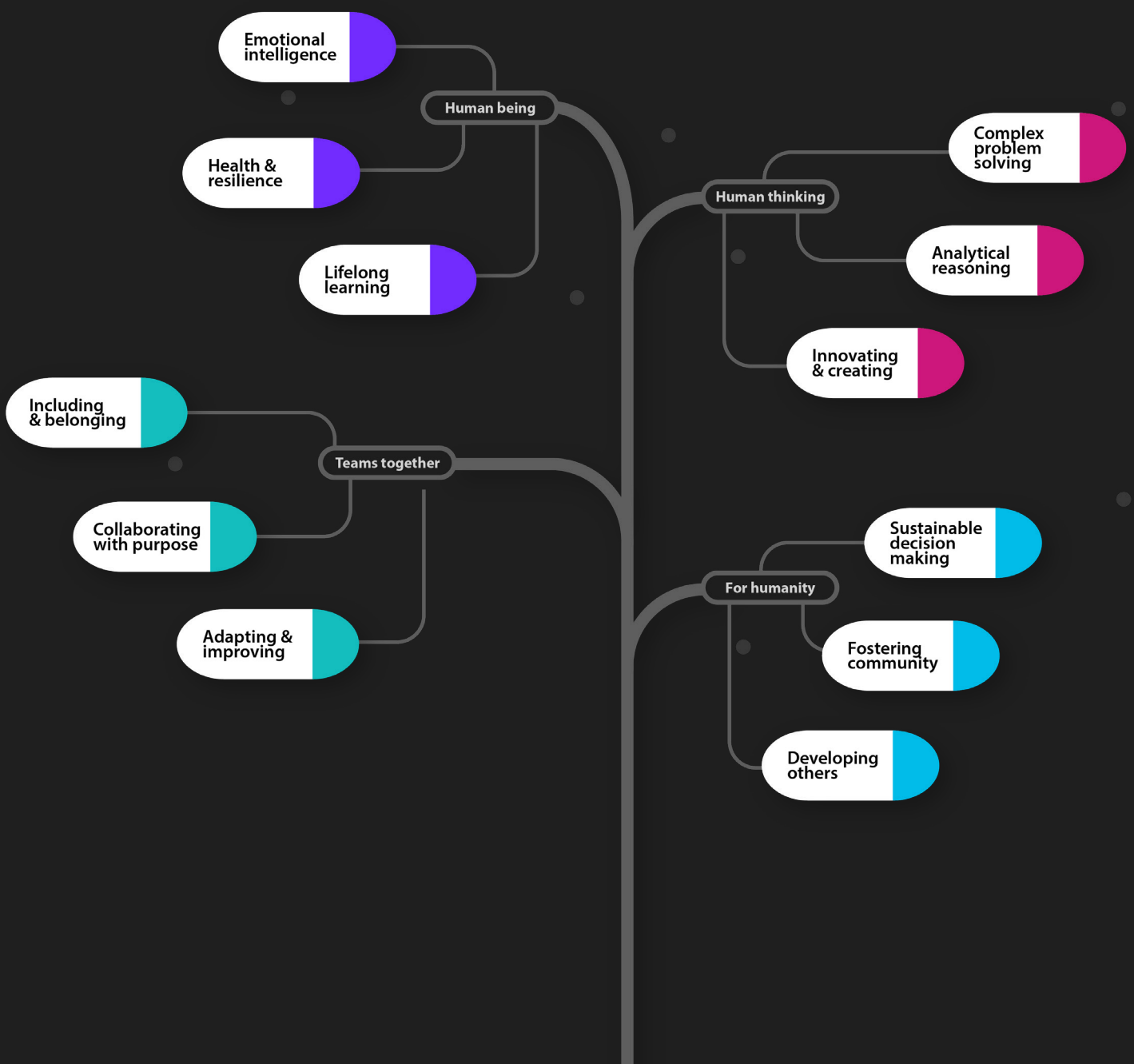
Moving from top to bottom, the scope of capabilities expands – from being primarily individually focused to a much bigger and broader agenda.

Many may seem familiar to us as humans, but the AI context is making them even more important. Also, they can change as technologies develop, so we need to evolve our understanding and approaches continually. For example, analytical reasoning in an AI context is becoming less about processing and more about problem defining, prompting, reviewing and critiquing.

We believe everyone needs to boost their ‘human capabilities’ but there may be particular priorities for an organization at any point in time.

Like any capabilities, you can build capability at individual, team and organizational levels. Leaders and L&D teams can make learning and development solutions available for individuals, for teams to learn together, for certain populations (e.g. senior leaders) or for everyone (through a learning campaign/theme).

Please see the appendix (page 8) to discover the top skills under each of the twelve capabilities.



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Seven factors to optimize 'human learning'

To boost human skills and capabilities it is vital we attend to how we design and provide the best learning – we need to respect how humans learn best.

In our experience, humans learn best when these seven factors are in place.

Our RESPECT model provides a helpful checklist to boost human learning

Rhythm

As adults, we learn best when it is relevant, integrated in the rhythm of work, and valued by the organization. Ensure learning is well-timed - it can be tempting to train new managers months ahead but they acquire skills best when they have real experiences to address. Ensure it fits well in the organisational rhythm, easing the path for all involved.

Emotions

Learning is an emotional business, but is usually ignored in the design of learning solutions. Humans retain knowledge best when it's also connected to a mildly positive emotion / memory of one. Additionally, strong emotions are contagious (such as courage or anxiety). Human learning design needs to attend to the emotional experience too.

Social connection

Humans are neurologically wired for connection, and hormonally rewarded for successful connections. Being together physically doesn't guarantee connectedness any more than virtual, in fact it can sometimes get in the way. If events help build meaningful connections, learning and wellbeing can be boosted too.

Psychological safety

Learning can involve risk - we need to stretch beyond our comfort zones, be able to get involved, and be ready to speak up. Take time to establish a safe environment and a sense of belonging and inclusion – it's OK and right for me to be here, now, with these people.

Engaging design

Learning needs to be engaging by design. Excite learners so they feel open, present, intrigued – not distracted, overwhelmed, judged. Engage them with methods that blend together providing for accessibility, different preferences, and greater impact. Embed learning real through on-the-job reinforcement, practice, peer support. Evolve solutions as the contexts and learners do.

Continuing

Human learning is rarely one and done. The half-life of skills is now estimated to be 5 years or less. Also 'mastery' is part of the human condition, good for our mental and cognitive health. Our brains can retain plasticity through our whole lives - we need to keep using them, having new experiences, and building fresh connections.

Time

The #1 challenge for L&D uptake is "not enough time". Learning events can be a welcome oasis in the busyness of work, but humans really do need time and space to learn, retain and practice new capabilities, especially at the start. Sleep also helps so try and avoid cramming everything into one

It's essential to keep moving, learning, and evolving for as long as you're here and this world keeps spinning.

– Rasheed Ogunlaru

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Examples of how organizations are responding to the challenge

Here are a few examples of learning solutions we have partnered with client organisations to develop – for inspiration. They typically focus on a critical human skill / capability and are designed in ways that reflect our RESPECT model.

In-team activities

Engaging activities for teams to learn together in a team meeting.

- Fits into the existing team meeting rhythm
- Engaging and participative design
- Flexible location (on site / online)
- Conversation based, antidote to digital
- Pick of topics – to ensure relevance

Annual campaign of 'hot topics'

A calendar of events through the year with one focus topic per month.

- Likely to be 10 topics / themes over the year
- Pick topics that matter for your organisation
- A flow of learning events throughout the year
- Multiple activities each month (e.g. for individuals / teams / leaders) targeting a capability

On demand programs

Off the shelf or bespoke program, single or multiple topics.

- For an existing team or a mixed group.
- Extensive range of topics to choose from, aligned to our human skills.
- One off or a collection of modules
- Blended design with digital content plus face to face or virtual options available.

Skill boosters in the rhythm of work

Using technology or processes to trigger relevant and timely learning.

- Fully / partially automated – using LMS / HR process / email system / MS Teams
- Targeted to priority populations (e.g. new managers on appointment, new starters, new project managers)
- Or people show interested / search a topic (e.g. analytical reasoning)

Boosting human skills and capabilities is becoming more important, not less. When we are connected to each other, a wider purpose, and ourselves we are better able to navigate the inherently uncertain world we occupy.

Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.

– Chinese proverb

Appendix

Human skills & capabilities

Developing any capability requires a combination of mindset, skillset and action.

HUMAN BEING					
Emotional intelligence		Health & resilience		Lifelong learning	
Optimising strengths	Emotional agility	Wellbeing attentive	Proactively dealing with stress	Fostering a growth mindset	Career designing
Impact on others	Authenticity	Mental resilience	Sustaining boundaries & energy	Learning agility	Confidence

Self-aware • Curious • Growthful

HUMAN THINKING					
Complex problem solving		Analytical reasoning		Innovating & creating	
Making sense of complex systems	Multi-modal evidence	Storytelling with data	Reviewing critically	Using design thinking	Fostering disruptive thinking
Experimentation	Making dynamic decisions	Using AI & prompt engineering	Critically prioritising	Idea networking	Using creative tools

Mentally elastic • Question well • Evidence-led

TEAMS TOGETHER					
Including & belonging		Collaborating with purpose		Adapting & improving	
Empathy & relating to others	Psychological safety	Shared goal setting	Proactively dealing with stress	Change readiness	Agile working
Diversity in teams	Building trust in teams	Fostering accountability	Effective teams	Continuous improvement	Conflict resolution

Actively listens • Humanity & compassion • Trustworthiness

FOR HUMANITY					
Sustainable decision making		Fostering community		Developing others	
ESG / CSR	Evidence-led decision making	Engaging communication	Connecting & networking	Coaching	Mentoring
Governance & risk control	Business acumen	Leading without authority	Bringing people together	Building a bench of talent	Empowering

Thinking beyond boundaries • Open-hearted • Ensuring a positive legacy



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