

The Secrets of Turning AI Career Threats into Engaging AI Career Opportunities

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) has always carried a dual promise: extraordinary progress and profound disruption. For decades, this tension lived mostly in academic debates and speculative forecasts. But today, AI is no longer a distant technological conversation. It has entered everyday work, reshaping tasks, roles, and expectations.

However, when organizations now attempt to implement AI in the work processes, they are facing substantial resistance from many of the people who are supposed to use it to improve their performance (Welch et al, 2026). *Why are people resisting the new AI technology that is representing so much of our future?*

Gallup (2026 p. 4) is blaming leaders for not championing AI well enough. “Winning the AI revolution will depend not just on the technology you deploy but also on how well you lead the people using it.”

In addition to lacking leadership, rigid workflows, entrenched power structures, and misaligned incentives are other organizational barriers to AI adoption (Li et al, 2025). There are also several psychological barriers contributing to AI resistance, such as rigidity, autonomy, and human preferences (De Freitas, 2025).

We even find those who combine organizational, individual, and technological issues to assess AI transformation readiness (Dobslaw et al, 2026).

Surprisingly, we find far less nuanced accounts of *career* barriers to AI implementation in spite of careers being seen as the relevant meeting point between organizational and individual/psychological AI barriers.

The most observed connection is the AI career threats of job losses due to automation. However, this is a myopic view of AI career threats, which limits our ability to turn around these diverse AI career threats into engaging AI career opportunities.

Thus, some of the greatest secrets to successful AI are *how to turn diverse disengaging AI career threats into engaging AI career opportunities*.

The purpose of this Decision Dynamics Research report is to reveal this secret of how AI can be a good career game-changer for as many as possible. We do this by:

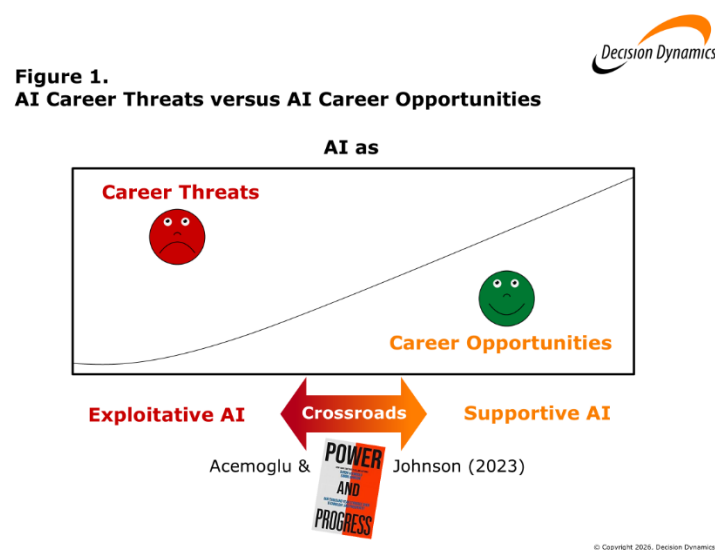
- a) contrasting AI career threats and opportunities;
- b) identifying how differently we individuals view our careers;
- c) highlighting how our limited views of others' careers result in misunderstandings and distrust that add to resistance-generating AI career threats;
- d) pinpointing different kinds of AI career threats;
- e) and several approaches for turning these threats into more engaging AI career opportunities.

AI Career Threats versus AI Career Opportunities

AI has gone through several cycles of over-optimism and resulting “winters” of reduced funding since the 1950s. It can be seen as back-and-forth dominance between AI pessimists emphasizing various threats and AI optimists promising fantastic achievements.

Both these threats and opportunities focus on the impact of AI on our working lives, that is, our careers. Over the past 70 years, there have been increasingly dire warnings about how many jobs will be wiped out by AI. Others are claiming that AI will both enable people to lighten people’s present jobs and create new jobs.

It should be clear that these AI-related career threats and career opportunities are not either/or situations, but instead both/and questions of more or less AI-related career threats and opportunities as illustrated in Figure 1 below.



The diagonal dividing AI career threats and opportunities in the figure is deliberately tilted toward more career threats rather than career opportunities. This is partly because of Nobel Laureates Acemoglu and Johnson (2023) impressive book “Power and Progress” that studied a millennium of technological developments. They found that progress has often disproportionately benefited elites and exacerbated inequality over this period.

Acemoglu and Johnson also found the recent bad AI news that these exploitative powers became increasingly dominant since the digital transformation of the 1980s throughout the present AI revolution with work-reducing automation and surveillance to save costs at the expense of many people.

However, their good AI news is that such exploitative AI is not necessary. Instead, we are still at a crossroads where we can choose more supportive AI that they call “*machine usefulness*”. It includes better person-computer interaction that creates more human work tasks, better human information processing, and platforms for more human cooperation.

Acemoglu and Johnson’s book represents not only an outstanding research achievement, but also a manifesto for redirecting AI and other technological developments towards a better society with prosperity for the many instead of only the very few. We fully support this noble aim of these Nobel Laureates.

Almost all medium and large-sized organizations are likely to have broad arrays of their people along the continuum of more or less AI career threats and AI career opportunities. The further to the positive right side, the easier to engage people with AI career opportunities.

The greater challenges are found more to the middle and left side of this continuum where we need to also address experienced AI career threats. Unfortunately, how to do so well has been kept secret due to the prevalent career myopia that most suffer from.

Secret 1: There is no single AI career threat, so consider at least four

We typically believe that most people view careers in a similar way to what we do ourselves. However, there are very different ways to view our careers, and this can greatly affect what we see as threats or opportunities in our working lives.

For example, the prevalent employee resistance to mergers & acquisitions is driven by different reasons depending on individuals' various career orientations (Larsson, Driver, Holmquist & Sweet, 2001). This suggests that there is no single panacea for turning experienced career threats into engaging career opportunities.

One of the world's leading career tools is the Decision Dynamics Career Model (eg, Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth & Larsson, 1996) that is based on four fundamental career concepts. They represent four different career directions and time horizons as illustrated in Figure 2:

Figure 2.
Four Fundamental Career Concepts



- > A person's view of a successful career
- > Direction of movement and duration of stay in one field

				
	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Direction	In-depth specialization	Managerially upward	Lateral related	Unrelated variation
Duration	Working life	Fastest way up	5-10 years	2-4 years

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- *Experts* who specialize in-depth a specific professional area to become as good as possible for as long as possible;
- *Linears* who climb upwards to higher managerial positions with greater responsibility and authority;
- *Spirals* who broaden their experiences by moving sideways to related jobs every 5-10 years and thereby gradually becoming more generalists; and

- *Transitories* who switch to new unrelated jobs as freely and often as possible as more free change agents.

Most of us are aware of only one or two of these four career concepts, typically the most traditional career orientations Expert and/or Linear. This means that two or even three of these career concepts tend to be unknown.

Such myopic career views are likely to blind us to the full spectrum of career diversity as a key source and solution to the secrets of turning AI career threats into engaging AI career opportunities (Larsson, 2026a).

Secret 2: Career misunderstandings between us are interpersonal AI career barriers

These are not only four different career development patterns, but also how we tend to view both our own and, importantly, others' careers (Larsson & Kling, 2017). Figure 3 displays 16 interpersonal combinations of how persons with one primary career concept tend to view persons with different career concepts.

For instance, consider the top Expert row of the career spectacle matrix in Figure 3 with how persons with Expert career concepts tend to view other people with the four different career concepts. An Expert is likely to view other Experts as serious, but often wrong as the Expert him/herself can believe that s/he is more correct. An Expert tends to view Linear managers as deciding more than they have knowledge for; Spiral generalists as lacking focus and stamina when they broadened their experiences; and Transitories as "jacks of all trades, masters of none" when they were jumping quickly around many various jobs.



Figure 3.
Career Spectacles – Different Talent Blind Spots that Often Lead to Misunderstandings and even Distrust between Persons

	 Expert	 Linear	 Spiral	 Transitory
Expert	Serious (but wrong)	Decides more than he knows	Lacks focus	"Jack of all trades"
Linear	Management problem	Goal oriented competitor	Faulty compass	Hopeless CV
Spiral	Overly specialized	Sacrifices self for career	Exciting person	Flexible but wasteful
Transitory	Rigid and narrow-minded	Conventional careerist	Flexible but careful	Free-spirited

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Looking at the Linear row, a Linear person can view other Linears as goal-oriented competitors (who may aim to replace or even leapfrog the viewing person); Experts as management problems (who don't like change and ask difficult questions); Spirals as having faulty compasses

when developing sideways (“don’t you know which way is up”); and Transitories as having hopeless CVs (not being able to become managers).

Similarly, the Spiral and Transitories show 4 + 4 career spectacle views that are mostly problematic. Figure 3 shows that as many as 14 of the 16 interpersonal combinations have talent blind spots that tend to misunderstand, disparage, and even distrust the others.

The only two really positive and appreciative career spectacles are those Spirals that view other Spirals as having exciting broadening career stories and Transitories that see other Transitories as fun and free-spirited souls.

Of course, these otherwise negative and unappreciative career spectacles do not represent how we should best view the careers of others. Instead, they help us to better understand how we tend to misunderstand other persons’ careers and how this can contribute to our difficulties to manage the diversity of careers in leadership, appraisal, rewards, development, and change processes.

Leaders who instead understand their direct reports’ viewpoints and talents better will be able to better communicate and otherwise adjust their leadership actions in more engaging ways.

We will show how this can be done in more detail in another section after we have looked closer at different AI career threats and opportunities.

Four different sets of AI Career Threats

We are likely to view different kinds of AI career threats depending on our various career concepts from the most stability-oriented Experts to the most change-oriented Transitories.

- **Secret 3: Expert specialists** are the most disturbed by changes in general as they are the most invested in their present specialization that may become undermined. Thus, they can be expected to be especially threatened by job insecurity from AI and related changes.
- **Secret 4: Linear managers** worry about that AI can undermine their leadership and especially fear demotions and fewer upwards promotions as a result.
- **Secret 5: Spiral generalists** are concerned about less lateral teamwork due to AI and whether they and some of their co-workers will be laid-off because their roles have become obsolete.
- **Secret 6: Transitory change agents** are the least likely to worry about being laid off due to AI given their strong preference for changes. Even if they may be somewhat concerned that AI will lead to fewer available job openings, perhaps most concerning to them would be the extent to which AI results in close surveillance of their work that they often dislike.

These different AI career threats are listed below in Figure 4 in the next section along with the different ways to turn them into AI career opportunities.

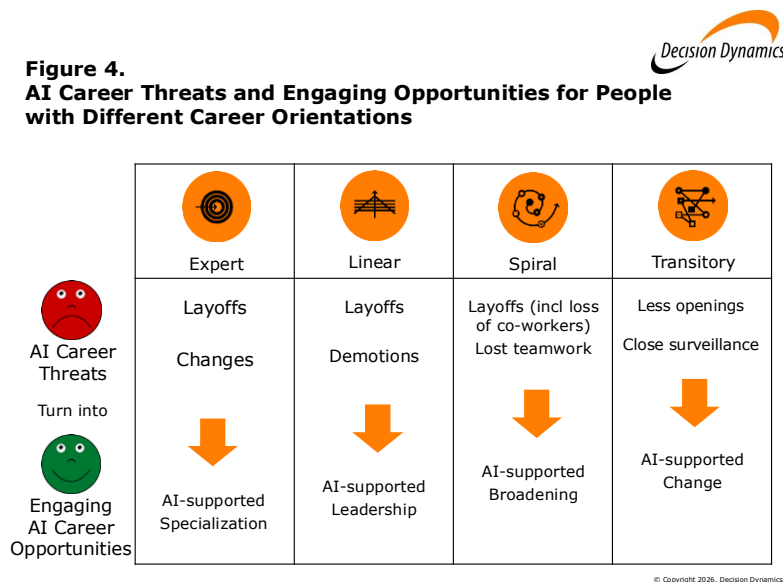
It is important to realize that we are focusing on key nuances of AI career threats that should not be swept under a general carpet of anti-tech resistance that can be fixed with some training. Expert AI career threats are not turned into engaging AI career opportunities in the same way as Linears, Spirals or Transitories.

How Can We Turn these AI Career Threats into Engaging AI Career Opportunities

AI's great versatility enables us to turn the various AI career threats into engaging AI career opportunities in more personalized ways. The normal way to implement changes is to push as many as possible to "get over" more or less resistance and accept the change in question.

Hopefully, this report has by now communicated that *there is no single way of turning the diversity of experienced AI career threats into engaging AI career opportunities*. We all have different sets of career motives and engagement drivers & killers (Larsson & Kling, 2017). Trying to tell all the people who experience AI career threats to "get over" their concerns ("or else") will rather add to their disengagement.

Figure 4 summarizes both four major sets of AI career threats and four major ways towards more engaging AI career opportunities. The main common denominator is to personalize the AI usage to support each career concept's developmental direction (Larsson, 2026b).



Supportive AI can help all four career segments with their respective kind of engaging developmental direction as outlined here:

- **Secret 7:** AI can support **Experts** to continue their engaging long-term in-depth specialization, including "protecting" them from disengaging short-term change disturbances;
- **Secret 8:** AI can support **Linears** with their engaging leadership challenges, including "protecting" them from disengaging administrative bureaucracy;
- **Secret 9:** AI can support **Spirals** with engaging development of themselves, others, and teams in creative and broadening ways, including "protecting" them from disengaging competition, conflicts, and narrow-minded routines; and
- **Secret 10:** AI can support **Transitories** as they engage in change processes where they can make use of their speed and flexibility, while also "protecting" them from disengaging inertia, long-term formal planning, and strict rules and routines.

Note how a common denominator across the four ways towards more engaging AI career opportunities is that *AI not only supports the different individual engagement drivers but also protects against their respective engagement killers, which are often close to the experienced career threats.*

This is the recurring core insight in this set of secrets of how to turn various AI career threats into more engaging AI career opportunities.

How to View Others' Careers in More Engaging Ways

It is a common mistake to view AI threats versus opportunities in terms of “man versus machine”, when many career threats stem partly from how we tend to misunderstand, disparage, and distrust others and their careers. Leaders can play a critical role for involving employees in AI projects according to:

- **Secret 11:** Be more open, understanding, appreciative, and trusting of others' careers in order to be more interpersonally engaging during AI implementation processes.

This can be done with the help of a more positive career spectacle matrix in Figure 5 below:



Figure 5.
Opening Up Our Career Views to See, Appreciate and
Trust the Engaging Benefits of Others' Careers

	 Expert	 Linear	 Spiral	 Transitory
Expert	Adds in-depth knowledge	Responsible for taking charge	Broad bridge to others	Quick and mobile fixer
Linear	High quality Corporate memory	Leading competitive growth	Creative developer	Customer flexibility
Spiral	Committed well of wisdom	Performance driver	Synergistic teamwork	Fast learning risk-taker
Transitory	Loyal long-term stability	Efficient formal structure	Holistic skill diversity	Networking New opportunities

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For example, looking at the first row of how an Expert can view the various careers of others in more constructive ways, another Expert can add other in-depth knowledge (instead of being wrong), Linears can be responsible for taking charge (rather than lacking knowledge), Spirals as broad generalist bridges to others, and Transitory as providing quick and mobile fixes.

The other three Linear, Spiral, and Transitory rows contain 12 more understanding and appreciative views of others' careers that are likely to result in much less threatening and more engaging communication around better opportunities for how these persons can develop their working lives.

Conclusion: Turning AI Career Threats into Opportunities with Greater Precision

We can conclude that the key secrets for turning frequently experienced AI career threats into engaging AI career opportunities require (a) greater awareness that diverse career views lead to different kinds of AI career threats; (b) greater personalization of how these different AI career threats can be turned around to engaging AI career opportunities; and (c) more appreciative interpersonal understanding of one another's career diversity.

In other words, there is neither a single general reason for persons to experience AI career threats, nor one general solution for turning them into engaging AI career opportunities. Different kinds of disengaging AI career threats require various ways to understand and engage others' careers to develop more engaging AI career opportunities.

This report has simplified such turnarounds to four fundamental career orientations. In practice, we individuals have different combinations of two or more career concepts and even more underlying career motives. This means that there are many opportunities for further understanding and managing individual career development in relation to AI in more precise ways.

Thus, we are planning to follow up this report with at least one more forthcoming report with an additional set of AI career secrets later this fall to also be offered for free via LinkedIn posts:

- “Discover your own and others' career misdirections and motivation potentials for more precise development of engaging AI career opportunities”

We also recommend a complementary perspective for individuals navigating AI-driven career change is provided by Anna Zadrozna (2026) from Career Angels, who explores how professionals can future-proof their careers, manage employability risks, and use AI as an ally.

All of you readers who are interested in discussing how you can use our secrets of turning AI career threats into engaging AI career opportunities in practice, please email your co-author/s of choice and let us communicate (see the co-author list at the end).

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