

Where Human Expertise Moves When AI Does More of the Work

AI changes where expertise creates value. The durable human role is purpose, context, judgment, validation, integration, and accountability.

When the cost of producing a first draft falls, the scarce capability is knowing what should be produced, whether it is correct, and how it should change the real world.

AI is making it possible to produce analysis, software, documents, and recommendations much faster. That does not make human expertise less important. It changes where expertise creates value.

I see this directly in product development. AI can generate working code surprisingly quickly. In my own work, the time has shifted toward defining the problem, establishing requirements, creating validation harnesses, testing edge cases, and performing quality-control checks before live engineers review the code. I also use separate AI systems for generation and review so that the same system is not grading its own work.

The pattern extends beyond software

In building operations, AI can help prioritize alarms, identify patterns, and direct technicians toward the issues most likely to matter. The technician still provides the context needed to determine whether the recommendation makes sense in that building, with that equipment, under those operating conditions.

In law, finance, strategy, and other knowledge professions, AI can accelerate research, drafting, comparison, and scenario analysis. People still decide which questions matter, what tradeoffs are acceptable, how uncertainty should be handled, and who will own the consequences.

Five responsibilities where human expertise moves

1. Frame the problem

AI can answer a question, but people must determine whether it is the right question.

2. Set direction

Strategy requires choices about priorities, constraints, risk, timing, and the outcomes worth pursuing.

3. Validate the work

Faster production increases the importance of independent review, testing, and quality control.

4. Integrate the result

Value is created when an output changes a real workflow, decision, product, or operating model.

5. Own the outcome

AI can recommend an action. Accountability belongs to the person or organization that acts on it.

What leaders should do

- Develop domain expertise, judgment, systems thinking, communication, and the ability to test and challenge AI-generated work.
- Measure whether decisions improve, workflows become more effective, customers receive better outcomes, and the organization learns faster.
- Bring operators, specialists, product leaders, and executives into the work early enough to shape the solution and define what good looks like.

The organizations that understand this will not use AI merely to produce more. They will use it to make better decisions and deliver better outcomes.

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