

5 Essential Moves to Lead Talent in the Age of AI

Over the past decade, I've worked alongside leaders across industries – from tech startups to global enterprises – helping them navigate the messy middle of talent development. I've seen the growing tension between what employees need to grow and what organizations are prepared to deliver. And I can tell you this: those who still treat talent development as a support function are already behind.

Generative AI has cracked open a new era of possibility – and pressure. Sixty-five percent of companies are already using AI at scale in day-to-day operations. But talent strategies haven't kept up. Most organizations still push one-size-fits-all training, while today's workforce demands personalized, just-in-time development tailored to their role, generation, and future potential. You don't get that from static learning portals or checkbox compliance modules.

And here's the real risk: when your best people don't see a path to grow, they go. Quietly, and quickly.

[Deloitte's 2025 Human Capital Trends](#) report says it best: leaders must deliver “adaptive, tech-enabled, people-first strategies.” That's not a tagline – it's a survival strategy. In today's market, talent development isn't just a retention tool; it's an enterprise differentiator. Or a liability.

Think of this playbook like a chessboard. The companies that win won't just react to the moves in front of them – they'll anticipate what's five moves ahead. The five essential moves outlined here – drawn from real-world data, lived experience, and AI-powered practice – are designed to help you close the distance between where your people are and where your business needs to go. It's not about doing more. It's about doing smarter – with precision, urgency, and empathy.

Because if you're not investing in talent, AI won't save you. It will simply reveal – ruthlessly – how far behind you already are.

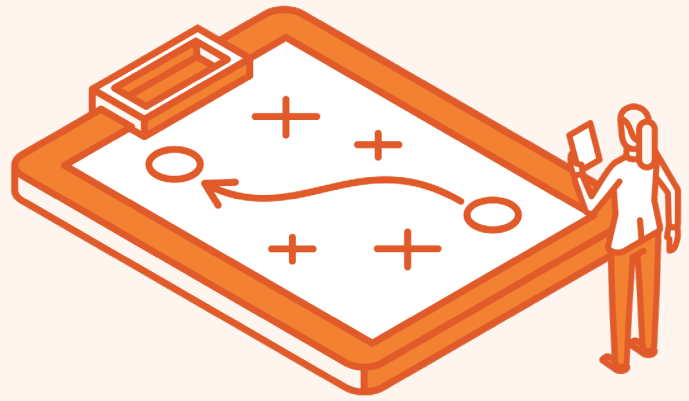
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MOVE 1: Map Your Talent Signals

AI thrives on structured data. Your workplace culture and talent engagement, by contrast, is shaped in the nuances – team dynamics, learning preferences, and the evolving aspirations of a multigenerational workforce. Bridging the two requires a modern, living map of workforce capabilities.



INSIGHT: According to [Deloitte](#), organizations that adopt clear, skills-based taxonomies are 57 percent more likely to fill critical roles internally. Yet few leaders can confidently identify their top five strategic skill gaps, let alone quantify them in real time.

If your leadership team can't name the top five skill gaps standing between today's capabilities and tomorrow's strategy, you're not managing talent – you're gambling with it. A structured, AI-enabled Skills Census gives you the visibility you need to act with precision. What's your plan to close the distance between assumptions and actionable insight?



ACTION: Launch a 90-day "skills census." that will surface and structure your workforce's capabilities. Leverage AI-powered diagnostics to assess individual and team-level skills at scale, then layer in manager insight to validate context and performance. The outcome: a dynamic, real-time Skills Graph – a strategic asset that gives leaders continuous visibility into what their people can do today, where critical gaps exist, and how to align development efforts with evolving business priorities.

**This isn't just about readiness.
It's about competitive advantage.**



MOVE 2: Matching the Right Move to the Right Player

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into the workplace, it's essential to recognize that different generations engage with learning and development in varied ways. Tailoring learning experiences to these preferences can enhance engagement and effectiveness.



INSIGHT: [Another recent Deloitte survey](#) highlights that 74% of Gen Zs and 77% of millennials believe Generative AI (GenAI) will impact the way they work within the next year. However, only about half of Gen Zs (51%) and millennials (45%) say their employer is sufficiently training them on the capabilities, benefits, and value of GenAI. This indicates a gap between the anticipated impact of AI and the training provided to these cohorts.

Conversely, older generations, such as Baby Boomers, often prefer structured learning environments. They value traditional lectures, clear guidelines, and face-to-face interactions. This preference underscores the importance of offering diverse learning modalities to cater to all generational cohorts.

Are your current learning and development programs aligned with the diverse preferences of your multigenerational workforce?



ACTION: Implement a multi-faceted learning approach:

- **AI Nudges and Microlearning Videos:** Short, interactive content suitable for Gen Z.
- **Blended Cohorts:** Combining online and in-person sessions for Millennials and Gen X.
- **Expert Coaching & Peer Forums:** Structured, face-to-face learning for Baby Boomers and Executives.

Acknowledging and addressing these generational learning preferences will help organizations foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

MOVE 3:

Automate the Routine, Elevate the Strategic

In today's fast-paced business environment, leaders often find themselves bogged down by routine administrative tasks, leaving little room for strategic initiatives. The advent of generative AI offers a solution by automating these low-value activities, thereby freeing up leadership bandwidth for more impactful work.



INSIGHT: [A study by Brynjolfsson, Li, and Raymond](#) found that implementing a generative AI-based conversational assistant led to a 15% increase in worker productivity, measured by issues resolved per hour. Notably, less experienced workers benefited the most, improving both speed and quality of output.

Ask your team, which talent management tasks – such as compliance tracking, content curation, or scheduling – are consuming disproportionate amounts of leadership time?



ACTION: Pilot an AI-driven “Learning Concierge” to automate the curation of learning content and provide just-in-time resources. This approach not only enhances efficiency but also allows managers to focus on coaching and culture-building activities.



MOVE 4:

Coach with Data-Driven Empathy

Personalization is pointless without conversation.

As organizations increasingly adopt AI-driven personalization in learning and development, one essential element remains irreplaceable: the human conversation. Career development doesn't occur through content alone – it thrives in moments of connection, reflection, and trust between employees and their managers.



INSIGHT: Research indicates that regular career conversations between managers and employees are pivotal for fostering engagement and retention. For instance, a study by [Right Management](#) highlights that organizations promoting ongoing career discussions see enhanced employee engagement and improved retention rates. However, many managers find themselves ill-equipped to facilitate these discussions effectively. A survey by [Learnerbly](#) revealed that 69% of managers feel uncomfortable communicating with their employees, and 37% find it challenging to provide direct feedback.

This gap between insight and impact underscores the need for AI to do more than recommend content – it must also empower managers to coach with confidence. By transforming learning data into conversational tools, leaders can turn routine check-ins into meaningful growth opportunities, aligning development with real-time capability signals. Do your managers have access to the tools and insights necessary to lead impactful growth conversations on a regular basis?



ACTION: Implement quarterly “Growth Pulse” dashboards for every people leader. These should include individual skill progress, engagement indicators, and AI-generated coaching prompts tailored to each employee’s development journey.

When AI facilitates better questions, managers can foster better conversations – making career growth not just possible, but purposeful.

MOVE 5:

Compliance + Capability = Readiness at Scale

Tick-box training doesn't move markets.
Capability does.

For years, talent development investments have appropriately emphasized compliance – ensuring employees meet legal and regulatory standards. But in an environment defined by rapid technological change, shifting customer expectations, and skills volatility, compliance alone is no longer sufficient. What propels business forward is capability building: the intentional development of skills directly tied to strategic outcomes like innovation, agility, and customer value.



ACTION: Reallocate at least 10 percent of compliance-focused training hours toward targeted, high-impact learning tied to business-critical priorities – such as digital transformation, leadership readiness, or customer-centric innovation. Help employees view learning not just as an obligation, but as a catalyst for their careers and performance.

Reframing compliance as the foundation, and capability as the differentiator, your learning strategy can evolve from a policy into a strategic engine of enterprise value.



INSIGHT: [Research from McKinsey](#)

and other global talent studies shows that companies investing in future-focused skill development – especially during times of transformation – are significantly more likely to hit performance targets and retain top talent. High-performing organizations are reallocating learning budgets toward strategic capabilities that align with long-term value creation.

In this context, the goal isn't to replace compliance – it's to build upon it. Mandatory training lays the groundwork for operational continuity. But capability development powers competitive advantage. What percentage of your learning investment is actively building the skills your organization needs to grow, innovate, and lead?



Playing to Win

The rules of the game have changed. Generative AI has rewritten the playbook for how organizations build, retain, and elevate talent – but it hasn't replaced the human strategy required to deploy that power effectively. The five moves outlined in this playbook aren't quick fixes. They're strategic plays designed to position your organization to lead, not lag.

Like in chess, winning in today's talent landscape isn't about reacting to the move right in front of you. It's about seeing the board clearly, anticipating what's next, and making moves that align with your long game. Mapping skills in real time. Designing development that resonates across generations. Freeing up leaders to actually lead. Transforming data into coaching conversations. And reframing compliance as a launchpad for real capability.

None of these are optional – not if you're serious about thriving in a market that rewards speed, precision, and purpose.

The companies that succeed will be the ones willing to act before the talent gap becomes unbridgeable. Start with one move. Track the impact. Then play the next. Because in this era of AI-fueled acceleration, every day you hesitate is a day your competitors spend moving ahead.

And your people can't afford a leadership strategy stuck one or two moves behind.

Contact us today to learn how OpenSesame can help your organization.

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