

TrendBrews

THE HUMAN EDGE



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Pavlína Louženská is a trend forecaster and founder of TrendBrews, a consultancy that helps organizations, including Fortune 500 companies, understand and prepare for emerging trends. She is part of the international trendspotting community Culture Connectors and serves as Lead Mentor for Google for Startups across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Pavlína also advises technology companies and non-profit organizations, including the Independent Press Foundation. Her technology and trends newsletter, Pavlina Speaks, has more than 13,000 subscribers and was ranked by Substack among the world's Top 50 Rising in Business publications.

What has surprised you most about how work is evolving today?

What surprises me most is how many different versions of the future can exist inside the same company. One team might be redesigning its work around AI while another is still waiting for access to basic information.

We tend to talk about technological progress as if everyone moves forward together. Organizations are much messier than that. Reuters recently reported that 43% of banks still use COBOL, a language developed in 1959. The future is already here, it's just unevenly distributed.

The same applies to AI adoption. McKinsey reports that 88% of organizations use AI in at least one function, but only 33% use it in more than four functions. Suddenly, the narrative about widespread adoption does not hold up quite as well.

Which workforce trends do you believe companies are still underestimating?

The first is the quiet disappearance of the first rung. Junior work is precisely the work that automates first, and cutting it reads as efficiency this year. It shows up as a missing senior bench in ten years. Expertise was always a by-product of doing unglamorous work badly for a while under supervision. Remove that, and you have to design apprenticeships deliberately. Very few organizations are doing that.

The second trend is demographics. Everyone talks about Gen Z. The larger untapped pool is skilled people over fifty-five, whom companies often stop investing in years before they leave. Longer careers deserve much more attention.

A third trend is measurement. The volume of output stopped saying anything meaningful about the person producing it. Managers are often flying on instruments that no longer work.



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Which skills are becoming more valuable as AI continues to get more capable?

Judgement, taste, and the ability to frame a worthwhile problem.

When producing ten plausible answers becomes easy, deciding which question deserves attention becomes more valuable. So does recognizing what is missing from an answer that sounds convincing. That requires domain expertise.

I would also emphasize the ability to negotiate disagreement and take responsibility. AI can

help prepare a decision. Someone still has to explain the trade-offs, bring people with different interests together, and stand behind the outcome. A model can produce a recommendation. It cannot sit in front of a regulator, a board, or a client and answer for it. Whoever is willing to put their name on a decision becomes more valuable, not less.

And finally, there is humanity. We increasingly see younger people struggling with things we once considered natural: working in teams, overcoming failure, or performing under pressure. I think we will see more organizations deliberately training resilience, adaptability, and the ability to form real human connections.

Younger generations often have different expectations of work, leadership, and purpose. How should organizations respond?

I would retire the generational frame. What we often describe as a Gen Z attitude is actually a broader decline in trust toward institutions and confidence in the future.

Talk to a forty-five-year-old with two children and a mortgage and you will often find the same scepticism. Instead of segmenting people by birth year, organizations should pay more attention to sentiments and react to them.

What distinguishes organizations that adapt successfully to

Rapid technological change, shifting demographics, and evolving employee expectations are reshaping the world of work faster than most organizations can adapt. Pavlína Louženská, trend forecaster and founder of TrendBrews, discusses the signals business leaders should watch and the skills that will matter most in an AI-driven future.

change from those that constantly seem to be reacting to it?

They connect a long-term horizon with decisions they are willing to make today. They have a view of how their customers, workforce, and sources of value might change, and they test that view against several plausible futures.

Most companies confuse long-term planning with long-term thinking. They are not the same discipline. Planning gives you answers; thinking gives you questions. In a world that keeps moving, answers expire, usually faster than the planning cycle that produced them. The questions are the part that holds.

Stewart Brand's idea of pace layers is the most useful framework I know here: fast layers learn, slow layers remember. Every healthy system runs on both.

Companies need two clocks. A fast one for piloting, reacting, experimenting, and being wrong cheaply. And a slow one that remembers what business you are actually in, what you learned the last time someone promised you the same revolution, and what you decided you would never do.

Reactive organizations only have the fast clock. Every hype cycle produces its pilot, task force, and slide deck. Nothing accumulates because there is no slow layer for anything to accumulate into.

Fast without slow is just motion. Slow without fast is a museum.