

# The Four Meta-Competencies You Need to Thrive in the AI Revolution

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Executive Leadership Focus

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The relentless march of AI is transforming our world at an unprecedented pace.

It's a revolution that demands a new kind of leader, one equipped not just with technical skills, but with a deeper, more fundamental set of abilities.

In a recent article written by experts from a leading global business school, there are just four meta-competencies that will allow executives to not just survive but thrive in this new era. Captured under the acronym CARE, these competencies are: Critical thinking, Agile mindset, Results focused, and Emotional intelligence.

As project leaders at the forefront of rapidly shifting tectonic plates of a global industry, can you afford to be out of the 'skills' loop.

## 1 Critical thinking

In today's digital-obsessed world, we're drowning in information. AI can process and present this data at lightning speed, but it's critical thinking that allows us to make sense of it.

This is about gathering information from multiple sources, generating diverse options, and then making strong, confident decisions. It's about diverging your thinking before you converge it.

Critical thinking isn't just about research; it's the ability to hold and process information in your head, drawing connections that others might miss. It is a skill that can be learned and honed through reflective practice, problem-solving, and even provoking ourselves to consider different viewpoints. This is where we have to challenge the status quo, assumptions, habits, and routines we have followed – disrupt ourselves and our team.

In the age of AI, critical thinking is more vital than ever. It includes the ability to see the connections between different stimuli and disparate pieces of information, to make decisions based on multiple points of data. While AI can process masses of information quickly, making those links and supporting decisions, it currently lacks enough of a human touch when it comes to judgement, oversight and people-based decisions.

A prime example of critical thinking is Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. In the late 1990s he challenged the assumption that book retailers had to have a physical store, he saw the potential of the internet and started selling books online.

And then he gathered diverse information sources to see beyond books and turned his business into a platform for selling a multitude of products. He connected how technology would plug into people's desire for convenience.

## **2 Agile mindset**

The ability to pivot and adapt is crucial. Leadership agility and cultural agility are the two key components here.

Leadership agility means being able to shift resources, change course, and hold multiple approaches simultaneously.

Cultural agility is about working effectively across different cultures, being sensitive to diverse values, motivations, and experiences.

In a world of constant change, an agile mindset is essential for leaders. Today, leaders can't afford to hold a fixed course; they need to be able to have the ability to move in different directions depending on the need.

It's about being flexible and adaptable, which requires strong self-awareness and a willingness to change

Spanish fashion outlet Zara has revolutionised retail with an operation that responds rapidly to changing trends. Rather than taking months Zara delivers new designs to shops in weeks.

Its designers constantly iterate, changing designs to suit trends in a continuous cycle of adaptation. Zara's in-house production means it can adjust manufacturing to what is selling or not selling, while frontline

workers are empowered to feedback on trends they see to designers. This is not only leadership agility but cultural agility, embedded across its value chain.

## 3 Results focused

It's not enough to be a strategic thinker; you also need a drive for achievement and performance improvement.

Being results focused is the desire to take information and act, setting clear goals and then monitoring the performance of your part of the organisation.

You need to be both a strategic thinker and someone who can deliver results. Being results focused means you are always looking to improve to achieve the organisation's objectives or contributing to it. So, you need to be able to measure your performance, analyse it and look at ways to improve – that must be the focus all the time. It's a behaviour and a habit.

And being results focused means leaders holding themselves and others to account.

Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, is a results-focused leader who brought data-driven decisions to the ailing tech giant when he took over in 2014. He set performance metrics and accountability, with his aggressive growth targets for Azure and Office 365 seeing them become industry leaders.

Demonstrating high empathy, he encouraged a culture of continuous performance where staff would learn from failure to keep growing and improving. That growth mindset is the key to success.

## 4 Emotional intelligence

This is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions and those of others, which is something that AI is still struggling to do – for now.

In a world increasingly dominated by technology, the ability to connect with people on an emotional level is more important than ever.

This starts with being aware of your own emotions, how they affect your behaviour, and understanding your strengths and weaknesses. This helps leaders self-regulate and realise when emotions are taking over.

Emotional intelligent people know how to motivate themselves and have empathy, picking up cues so they can communicate appropriately, manage conflict and influence people in the desired direction.

Indra Nooyi, the former CEO of PepsiCo, famously wrote letters to the parents of her senior leaders, thanking them for the values they instilled. It built deep trust among her leadership team and showed her emotional intelligence.

She also openly talked of her struggle to marry work with family life, making her relatable and authentic to

staff, while also showing humility.

The Indian-born executive motivated her team by talking of “performance with purpose”, emphasising sustainability and employee well-being, plus she was a strong proponent of diversity and inclusion.

Many organisations are focused on skills development, including trying to keep up with the latest technological advancements. But I believe that focusing on these four meta-competencies is a more effective approach. They transcend specific skills and provide a foundation for success in any situation.

These meta-competencies support everything else and are at the core of a leader’s ability to change, engage with people, and to lead effectively.

In a world that is constantly changing, they provide the flexibility to think critically, stay focused on results, and will help executives use AI to their advantage rather than being victims of this technological revolution.

If you are interested in sharpening your executive Leadership skills, Project Management Global in conjunction with Warwick Business School is offering subscribers a 30% on the Executive Leaders Programme, places are going fast. For more information [Click Here](#) and reserve your place TODAY!

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