

Managing AI Employees: Embracing Digital Labor in Human Resource Management



Source: Pexels (2021)

Background

In today's hospitality landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a game changing factor in improving operation efficiency and guest satisfaction. As organizations increasingly depend on these intelligent systems, the role of hospitality managers is evolving to include the management of 'AI-powered 'digital workers' (Business Insider, 2025).

Sarah Franklin, CEO of human resources management solution Lattice, was the first to bring to reality the concept of 'digital workers', i.e. AI agents that are integrated into organization and treated like any human employee (The Guardian, 2024). In July 2024, Lattice announced that it begin assigning official employee records to AI agents and incorporating them into organizational chart (PR Newswire, 2024). This approach is intended to help companies better understand where their AI agents fit within the organization, while promoting responsible and transparent employment and governing of AI (Forbes, 2024). Remarkably, the initiative also aims to equip business leaders with tools to manage AI agents alongside human employees, ensuring alignment through entitlement and accountability (Business Insider, 2025).

As intelligent systems continue to evolve over time and take on larger responsibilities such as representing the organization in customer interactions, it has been proposed that AI agents should be held accountable to specific goals and standards, same as the human staff (Forbes, 2024). Therefore, the HR solution company recommends that AI employees be onboarded, trained, supervised and assessed just like their human counterparts (PR Newswire, 2024). By assigning clear objectives and conducting regular performance review, this approach seeks to help managers maximize the value of AI agents while elevating service quality.

Challenges

Despite the potential benefit of fostering a collaborative environment between AI and human staff, Franklin's proposition has sparked debate. Critics argue that equating AI with human employees

may be seen as a sign of disrespect towards human workers, and it may lead to intensified competition between AI and humans, further accelerating the issue of job displacement (The Guardian, 2024). Moreover, the proposal overlooks the practical difficulties of integrating AI agents into existing organizational frameworks. The dynamic and multifunctional nature of intelligent systems poses challenges in defining their roles and mapping them within departmental structures.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you support Franklin's proposal? Would you consider an AI agent a colleague and treat them equally to other members of your team? Why or why not?
2. What are the potential benefits of onboarding, training, supervising, and assessing digital workers in the same way as human employees?
3. What might explain the strong societal resistance to this concept? Are there other potential risks or ethical concerns not mentioned in the article that could arise from treating and assessing AI systems equally to humans?
4. Do you believe this concept will become more widely accepted in the future? What steps could be taken to accelerate its adoption?

References

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Keywords

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Organization
- Human Resource Management
- Digital workers
- Accountability
- Equality