Using AI to Make Nonprofit Work More Human

or: The Impact Treadmill, and How to Get Off It

presented by **Remy Reya**, Dir. of AI & Thought Leadership at

COMPASS
PRO BONO

At the end of this module, you will…

1. Understand why AI poses a threat—and an opportunity—for mission sustainability, workplace wellness, turnover, and burnout

2. Have a basic vocabulary (and starting point) for building a culture that supports healthy, human-centric AI integration/innovation

GOAL: you will walk away confident about how to create, or contribute to, a culture of **human-centric AI** at your nonprofit

The Promise

generated with ChatGPT 4o

THE PROMISE: AI-powered time savings

OpenAI claims AI tools save workers up to an hour a day
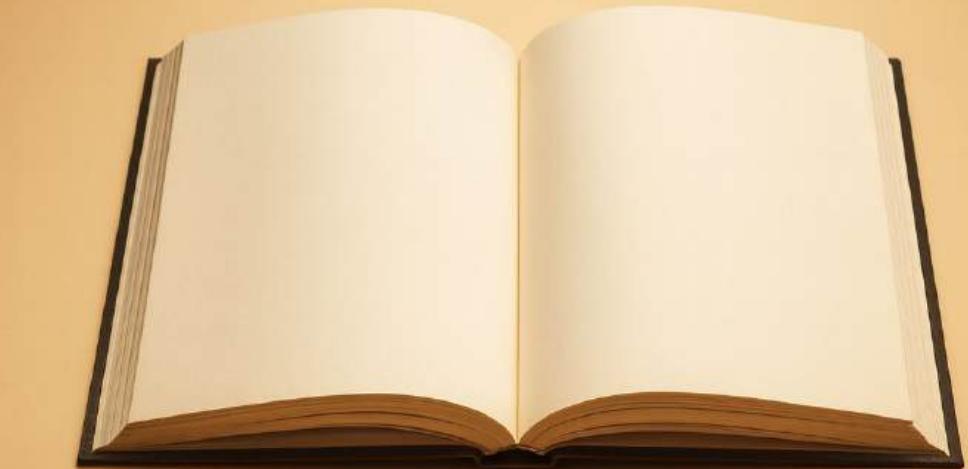
OpenAI

AI SAVES WORKERS AN AVERAGE OF ONE HOUR EACH DAY

AI set to save professionals 12 hours per week by 2029

The Thomson Reuters *Future of Professionals report* shows knowledge workers are optimistic about significant boosts to productivity, with AI poised to redefine workflows, drive innovation, and unlock new opportunities for growth

Articles: Adecco, Reuters, Tech in Asia/OpenAI

THE PROMISE: AI-powered time savings

Compass Pro Bono staff's individual hours reclaimed using AI (average):

October 2024: [Launch of AI tools]

January 2025: 4-5 hours/week

June 2025: 10-12 hours/week

"**Tasks take at least half as long, if not days less than before!** It's been a game-changer...I use ChatGPT for something almost every day!"

– one of our most tenured staff

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THE PROMISE: AI-powered time savings

AI use cases at Compass Pro Bono:

- **All:** Meeting note-taking
- **Data:** Volunteer survey analysis
- **Brand:** Media pitches, conference apps
- **Comms:** Social media/email content
- **Programs:** Volunteer matching help
- **Operations:** IT policy drafting
- **Fundraising:** Prospecting research

Where can those 10-12 hours go?

- **All:** Taking action on meeting notes
- **Data:** Follow-up interviews with volunteers
- **Brand:** Creating thought leadership *content*
- **Comms:** Engagement with community
- **Programs:** Final-pass curation of teams
- **Operations:** CPB-specific provisions
- **Fundraising:** Prospect cultivation

The Pattern

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THE PATTERN: Shifting goalposts

"**Everybody will need to do some work if he is to be contented....three-hour shifts or a fifteen-hour week may put off the problem for a great while.**"

– John Maynard Keynes (Essays, 1930)

Weekly working hours, 1900 to 2000

Work hours of full-time production workers (male and female) in non-agricultural activities

United States

Data source: Huberman and Minns (2005)

OurWorldinData.org/working-hours | CC BY

Our World in Data
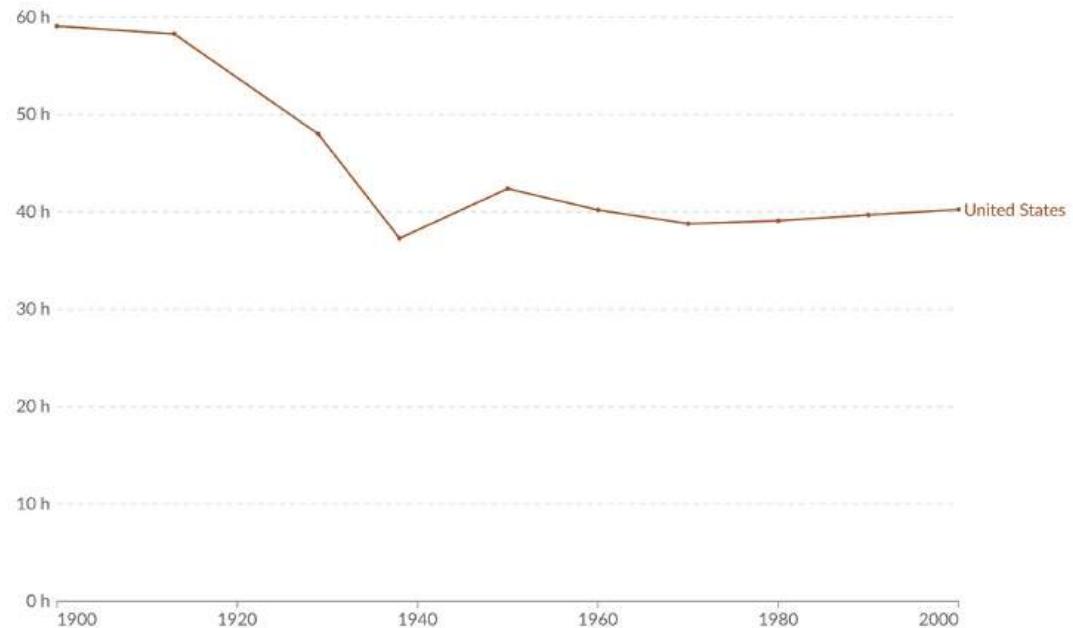
THE PATTERN: Shifting goalposts

We've seen this before.

Case Study: Instant Messaging Applications (Slack, Teams, etc.)

What they enabled...	What they caused...
Near-frictionless communication with coworkers	A nonstop buzz of notifications
Ability to engage in new ways (reactions, etc.)	Time lost from constant task-switching
More precision in message organization	A sense that we're always available/accessible

THE PATTERN: Shifting goalposts

KEY MOMENTS IN CONSUMER ELECTRONICS: A TIMELINE

And we'd seen it before that, too.

Late 2010s: Slack promises frictionlessness, delivers overwhelm
Early 2010s: Smartphones promise connectivity, deliver distraction
1990s–2000s: Email promises efficiency, delivers inbox overload
1980s: Computers promise productivity, deliver complexity

2020s: AI promises time savings...what will happen?

Graphic: Permuto (via WIRED)

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

New technologies *do* change the way we work.

(workplace)
But **culture** is the container that shapes—and limits—how transformative that change can actually be.

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN? (macro-level)

The Solow Paradox
aka the Productivity Paradox

"You can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics."

– *Robert Solow (*<u>NY Times</u>*, 1987)*

Growth in Labor Productivity, U.S. Private Business Sector
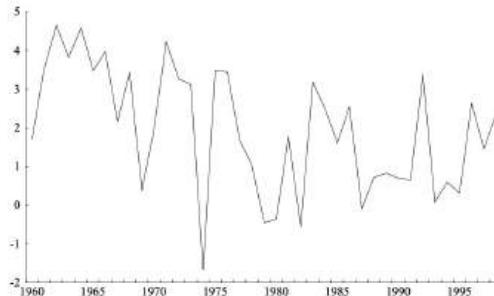
Real Investment in Computing Equipment (1992 Dollars)
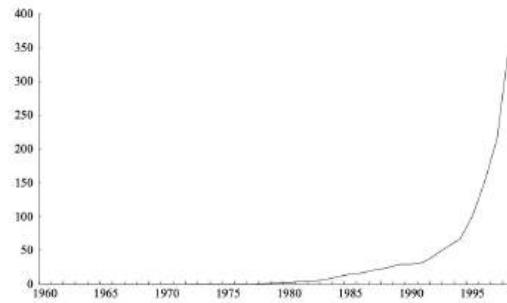
Charts: <u>Federal Reserve Board</u> (1999)

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN? (micro-level)

Parkinson's Law

"**Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.**"

– *C. Parkinson (Economist, 1955)*

Graphic: Prajula Ravichandran
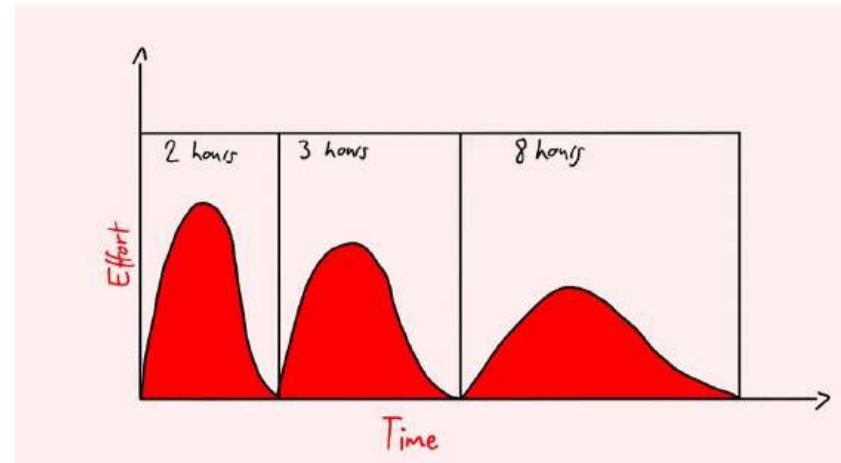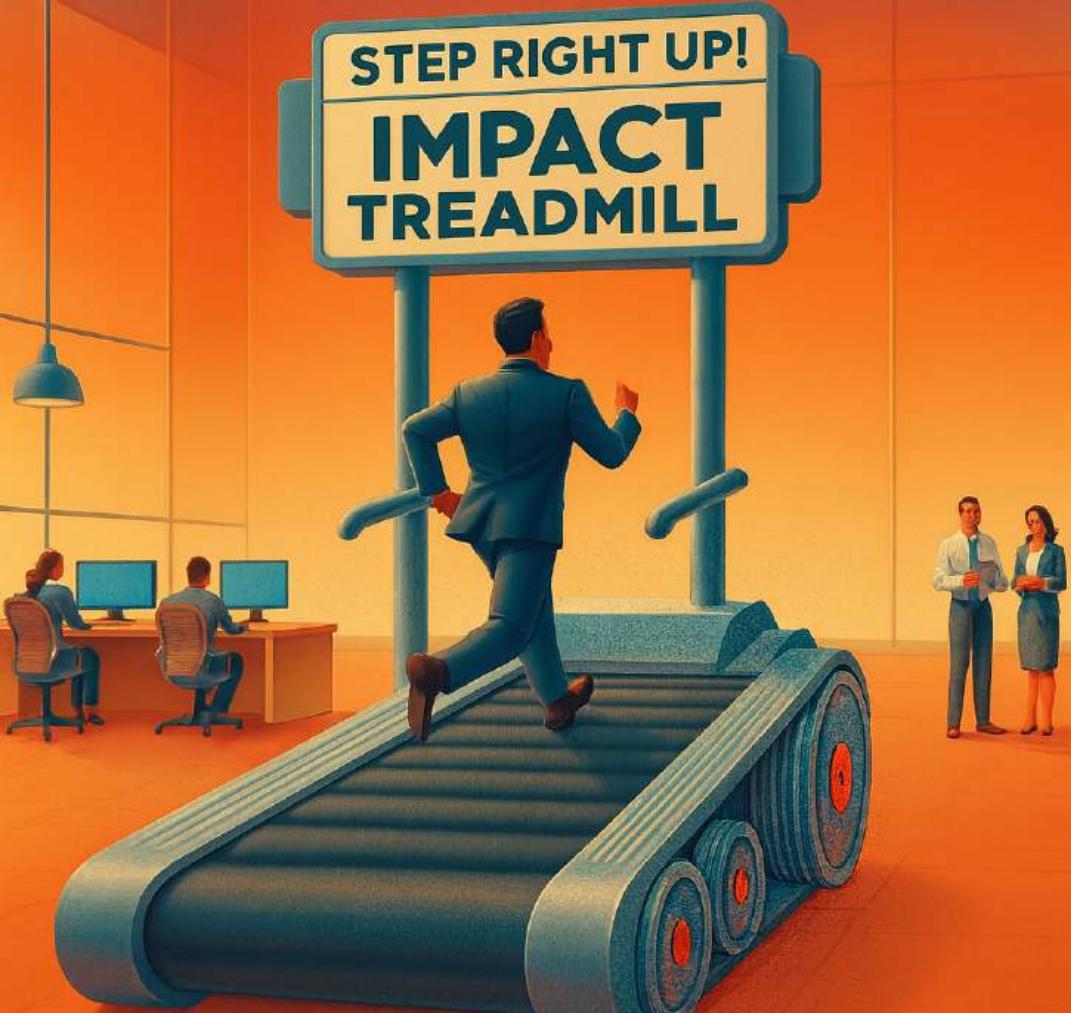
THE IMPACT TREADMILL:

1) new tech emerges and promises more efficiency

2) we decide to "10x our impact" or "supercharge our mission" using tech

3) tech accelerates the pace of work; that pace becomes the new normal

4) **when the dust settles, staff feel the squeeze**

AI's Early Warning Signs

Your Prize for Saving Time at Work With AI: More Work

We're accomplishing more, in less time, that creates a new conflict on the job

By *Callum Borchers* [Follow]
July 9, 2025 8:00 pm ET
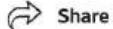
↪ Share   AA Resize   💬 95

Do Employees "Own" The Time They Regain with AI?

With AI eliminating administrative tasks, helping employe[...] [...]formation faster, and enabling more confident, data-driven de[...] [...]s may find themselves with less "busy work" and more ba[...] [...]do what, exactly? That's still up for debate, especially as the quest[...] [...]s this reclaimed time—the organization or the individual—re[...] [...]nswered.

Nearly half of employees [...] [...] our research believe that the time they save using AI at work b[...] [...] *not* their company. However, most employees (77%) would [...] [...] half of their reclaimed time on work-related activities, while th[...] [...] say they would spend time mostly on personal activities.

SPOILER: NO

Articles: Wall Street Journal, Forbes

AI's Early Warning Signs

What GenAI users are doing with time saved[2]

Perform more tasks	41%
Perform new tasks	39%
Experiment with GenAI	38%
Work on strategic tasks	38%
Finish work earlier	35%
Connect with coworkers	30%
Pursue professional development	30%
Increase attention to/quality of tasks	29%
Connect with family/friends	26%
Pursue activities outside work	24%
Perform personal tasks	24%

n = 13,102 employees in 15 countries/regions
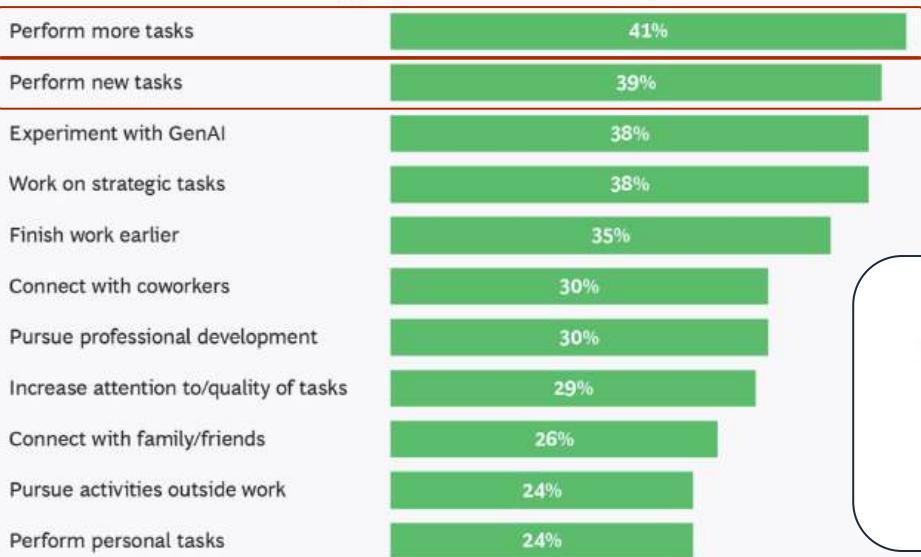
77% of employees say AI has added to their workload.

n = 2,500 employees in the US, UK, Australia, Canada

Data Sources: BCG (2024), Upwork (2024)

AI's Early Warning Signs

The early results indicate that the drive for automation is paying off. Slack says its AI tool, Slack AI, saved users 97 minutes a week of administrative time.

But that has created a new problem: Many workers aren't sure what to do with their extra time.

"They were still focusing on the work of work, which means we haven't quite made the operational and mindset shift to begin to do new things," Dresser tells *Fortune*, reflecting on the Workforce Lab study.

(Slack's CEO)

"The work of work"

Article: Forbes

AI's Early Warning Signs

What do you do with time freed up by AI use? (June 2025) – top responses at CPB

73% – Deep thinking or strategic planning

60% – Catching up on backlog tasks

40% – More warm-touch work (e.g., relationship-building)

33% – Nothing specific—time just gets absorbed into the day

> "While using Bliro for note-taking in meetings, I'm able to be more present in the discussion."

> "It allows me to get out into relationship-building spaces, follow up on communication faster, and focus on larger strategic projects."

> "Hard to say—just do more work!"

**Data Sources:** Compass Pro Bono internal staff surveys

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WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR US?

Burnout is widespread—and turnover looms.

That's bad for our people and our missions.

This is true across sectors...

89% OF TOTAL MANAGERS SAY THEIR EMPLOYEES ARE THRIVING IN THEIR CURRENT POSITION

VS

24% OF TOTAL EMPLOYEES SAY THEY ARE THRIVING IN THEIR CURRENT POSITION

66% of workers say that they are burnt out

including 82% of those aged 18-34

**42%** say that they are considering looking for a new job this year

...but it's especially severe in our sector.

78%
of nonprofits report rising demand for their programs

90%
of nonprofit leaders are concerned about burnout (their own and their staff's)

Annual Employee Turnover Rates

19%
Nonprofits

12%
Industry Average

Data Sources: Forvis/Mazars (2025), CEP (2025); **Graphic:** GalaxyDigital (2023)
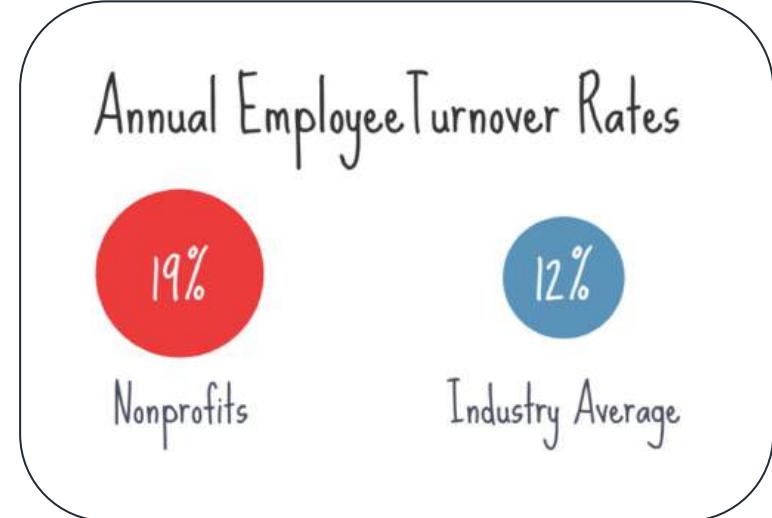
That's a problem.

For individuals...

chronic work-related stress

+ inadequate time & resources

+ exhaustion/emotional drain

+ a culture of overwork

= lower job performance,
general dissatisfaction

For organizations...

loss of institutional knowledge

+ cost of rehiring (≤2x the employee's salary)

+ lack of continuity in relationships/programs

+ additional work for remaining employees

= significant resources going toward
HR issue instead of your mission

The Remedy

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Compass Pro Bono's
Responsible AI Integration Framework

generated with ChatGPT 4o

1.0: Groundwork

2.0: Iteration

3.0: Scale

4.0: Agency

| Champions | Norms | Habit-Building | Experimentation | Training | Automation | Task Deployment |

Mindset

Use Case Mapping

Lesson-Sharing

Knowledge-Building

Customization

Decision-Making

Activity: North Stars & Commitment Cards
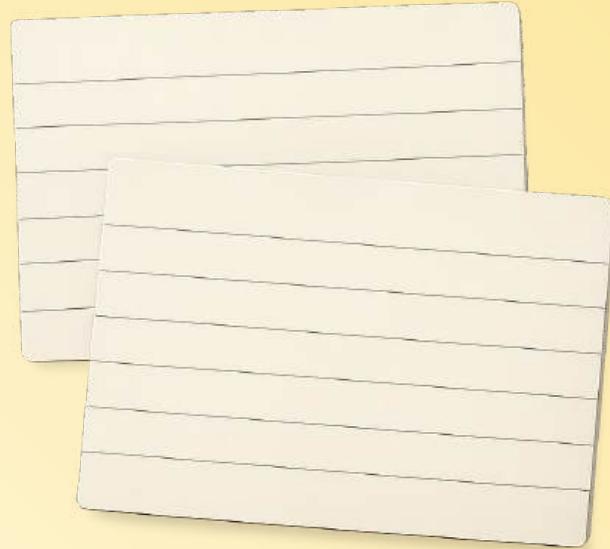
generated with GPT-5

THE REMEDY: Defining north stars

Take a moment to imagine:

How different would the world look if your organization (and every nonprofit like it) could move 2x as fast without needing 2x the budget?

How different would our sector look if we could actually "right-size" our people's workloads and reduce burnout/turnover among nonprofit staff?

Used properly, AI could be part of that.

THE REMEDY: Defining north stars

Write down on a notecard or sticky note:

How do you want to feel *using* AI a year from now? (1-2 words) ex: confident

How do you want to feel *doing your work* a year from now? (1-2 words) ex: light
→ What do you want more of?
→ What do you want less of?

What will it take to get there? (1 commitment – *"I commit to..."*)

Individual AI experimentation

Additional AI-focused capacity (staff/interns)

Templatification & data cleanup

Dedicated AI education/professional development

Paste it somewhere accessible. Read it when you choose to use AI.

THE REMEDY: Defining north stars

Then, ask your whole team:
What's needed to create the outcomes we want from AI/automation?

1) more AI integrations with platforms `technical`

(this is what my team came up with!)

2) time to break down tasks into steps `temporal`

3) time to playbookify work, clean up inputs (e.g., data) `temporal`

4) time/space to play + experiment with AI/automation `temporal`

5) time for rest `temporal`

THE REMEDY: Defining north stars

Then, use these words & ideas as:
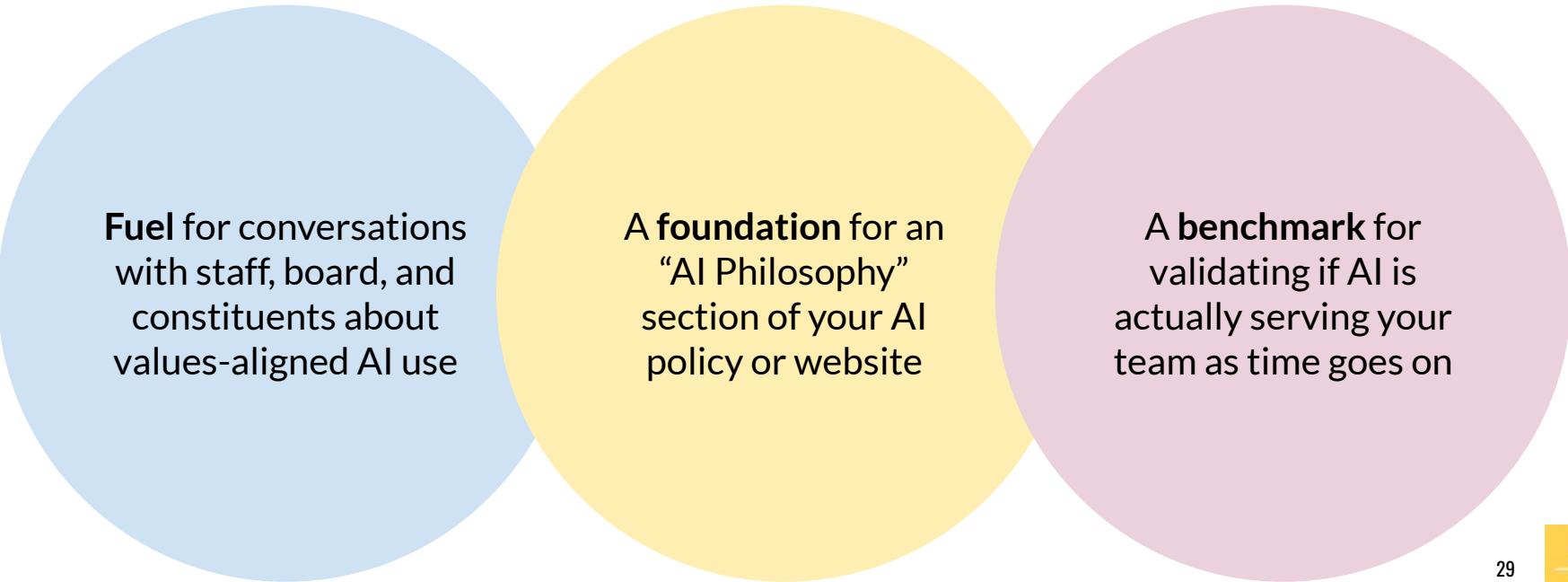
Fuel for conversations with staff, board, and constituents about values-aligned AI use

A **foundation** for an "AI Philosophy" section of your AI policy or website

A **benchmark** for validating if AI is actually serving your team as time goes on

THE REMEDY: Defining north stars

Don't minimize the gravity of the choice in front of us.

THE REMEDY: Defining north stars

And finally, as you get more back from AI...

Push the boundaries of what's felt "possible" in the past.

That's what it will take for this technology to truly transform our sector.

Articles: AACSB, Great Place to Work

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Thank you!

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