



I Am Not a Robot

AI and Leadership Hiring

The Board and
the Horizon



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Leaders For What's Next


We look at the duties of boards in the AI hiring domain, and scan the horizon.

In Part 3 of our series, senior Amrop partners discuss how boards need to balance independence and guidance when it comes to integrating AI in senior talent acquisition.

We ask the big questions around what it means to be human or an organization in a future where it may be hard to tell robots and humans apart.

Why should boards be on top of AI? How will the role of AI in executive hiring evolve, and how can we responsibly harness its rising power?





The misuse of AI in hiring risks serious fallout. Boards must safeguard its integration and purpose. And as AGI fast approaches, wise and holistic leadership must foster an enriching collaboration between humans and machines.

Watertight oversight: the role of boards
The role of values and ethics
The future of AI in executive hiring.



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1

Watertight oversight. The role of boards.

AI is transforming executive hiring. Given the stakes and opportunities, boards cannot stay on the sidelines. While not involved in day-to-day recruitment, they must oversee the use of automation in talent strategy, ensuring ethical, purposeful, and risk-aware practices. Not interfering, but guiding with wisdom and integrity.



From a governance perspective, they should be asking the CEO what's being done in the business, and does that pose a risk? And strategically, how can they streamline processes and get better hires?
Jamal Khan, Managing Partner, Amrop Carmichael Fisher, Australia



The issue is around boards using AI in processes. How it will create risks. So there's an educational part towards the board concerning the proper use of AI in executive search."
Job Voorhoeve, Leader, Amrop Global Digital Practice



If you are not inserting transparency and care into your AI deployment, everything will collapse."
Oana Ciornei, Amrop Global Board Member



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In March 2025, an employee of the software company Intuit claimed that its use of an automated video interview platform unfairly blocked her promotion. She blamed AI-driven biases related to her disability and race. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed charges on her behalf against Intuit and HireVue, the tech firm she said used AI in a discriminatory way. Both denied the accusation. Intuit stated that it provides reasonable accommodations to all applicants. HireVue denied that Intuit even used AI in this hiring process.¹

Law firm Fisher Phillips say this emphasizes the need for organizations using AI hiring tools to conduct regular accessibility audits, review vendor agreements, train their HR teams about possible AI biases and legal requirements, and allow for human review during an interview process. They should offer clear and simple pathways for applicants needing accommodations. And they should monitor and adjust AI usage to address potential biases.

Given the stakes, should boards get involved in guiding AI use in the firm's talent management strategy? Let's recall that a board's core activities concern *Control* (protecting shareholder wealth), and *Service*, helping the firm create value, aligning shareholder and societal interests.²

From artificial- to board intelligence

The answer is clear. Even if boards should not directly interfere in executive operations, recruitment automation and talent intelligence platforms do belong on their agenda. "From a governance perspective, boards should be asking the CEO: *what's being done in the business, and does that pose a risk? And strategically, how can we streamline processes and get better hires?* Not meddling, but making sure that the CEO is across that," says Jamal Khan, Managing Partner of Amrop Carmichael Fisher in Australia. Despite a counter-shift under the current US administration, DE&I is being upheld in many markets. "Firms need to look at recruitment biases, and the risks attached."

"Beyond recruitment, there's privacy, data protection, cybersecurity," he continues. "We're seeing a massive uptick from chairs, nomination, governance and HR committees around reviewing the board's skills matrix. We're seeing a lot of demand for people with AI, cybersecurity, and digital transformation experience."

Deep generalism

An NED should never be a technocrat. But boards do need to be hotwired into AI specialists such as the CIAO or equivalent — even if they are external. As we saw in our first article, this senior executive must drive AI quality and integrity across the organizational spectrum — including the way it identifies and hires its leaders.

Amrop has been researching 'digitization on boards' for nearly a decade.³ Board understanding of AI in executive hiring is still conversational, rather than literate. "They understand the elements," says Job Voorhoeve, leader of Amrop's Global Digital Practice. "Some use ChatGPT. The issue is around boards using AI in processes. How it will create risks. So there's an educational part towards the board concerning the proper use of AI in executive search." This implies that the chosen executive search firm must use technology legally, ethically and responsibly.

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Safeguarding the ship

As the Intuit/HireVue case demonstrates, any sense of sub-optimal deployment or misuse of AI exposes a hiring organization to legal or reputational fallout. We also see how swiftly and confidently the organizations responded.

A board needs to be on top of the key milestones in AI integration, including its purpose in the organization. "And then, operationally, it goes to the functional areas and heads," says Costa Tzavaras, Director of Amrop's Global Programs. Mismanagement in the ranks may ignite a crisis — one that the board doesn't fully understand because of obscurity surrounding the way AI has evolved in the firm. In this case, they will have difficulty formulating a swift and credible response.

"Risk frameworks are not 100% reliable because of the uncertainty in business. So you need to install models to navigate a crisis," says Oana Ciornei. When it comes to AI in board-level recruitment strategy, she asks board candidates whether they have a trusted and diverse entourage. Even if their organization is not currently undergoing large-scale AI transformation, "you need a solid network to develop yourself in the areas where you are not educated enough."

Values and ethics must always guide technology

Any board must ensure the firm's key activities are ethical, ESG-compliant (beyond a certain size) and filtered through its purpose and values. For example, if 'inclusion' is a beacon, to what extent does the firm's talent acquisition strategy reflect that?

"Integrity and ethics are the number one priority for boards," says Amrop Board Member Oana Ciornei. "When I studied computers, it was about technology: limitations in terms of capacity, storage, processing. But now it is the other way around." Executive upskilling and reskilling should be pushed by the board, "because otherwise you will end up installing algorithms, unable to determine why a certain decision is not ethical. For example, customer service fails to recognize, or rejects someone. You should be able to explain why. This is a big challenge. If you are not inserting transparency and care into your AI deployment, everything will collapse."

The Amrop Global Board is no exception. "We must prove we have qualitative processes which are sound and respectful, full of integrity," says Job Voorhoeve. Amrop's global values, such as 'Ethics', 'Caring' and 'Inclusion' must lead the way in our use of AI. This is the basis of trustworthy professionalism."

Oana Ciornei also emphasizes how Amrop's values determine AI guidelines, forming and informing its internal task forces. "That's why we said, *bottom up, top down* for 'Inclusion'. Is 'Curiosity' sufficiently reflected in our research? Has there been enough focus on 'Ethics'? Screening everything through the values makes the decision framework easy." She compares it to Plato's 'second navigation' — helping organizations move from mechanics to meaning. "Values will guide you through the models, the AI agents and technical aspects. You'll know whether something is right or not."

No firm is an island. AI is a social responsibility

Large, publicly listed, or financially regulated companies — especially in the EU — are required to follow ESG rules. But even smaller firms and startups are feeling the pressure from investors, clients, and regulators to adopt ESG practices. It's not just a matter of compliance but one of credibility. And boards are at the forefront of events.

"Consider an executive's decisions," says Costa Tzavaras. "*Improve the bottom line by X percent. Replace X percent of our workforce with AI.* But should we? And what does that say about the company? If we can eliminate 50% of our workforce, do we have to think about other ways of compensating people? How realistic is retraining half of the world's population? There is absolute value for AI. But we need a parallel conversation. If companies are driving the cost-cutting and growth agenda, what happens to the societal agenda? The endgame is unclear."

For Jamal Khan, factory automation is reassuring. "We didn't suddenly have heaps of unemployed people. On the whole, we find new jobs. I ask managing partners of accounting firms: *what will your graduate juniors do?* They're normally doing the transactional, processing work, and that's how they learned. That will be automated within a year or two. They naturally then become supervisors and oversee that work. So they'll progress more quickly."

"If you use much more automation technology in different parts of the company it's even more important that the human beings running it understand how and when to use it well and engage the people around them," says Amrop Board Member Mikael Norr. "I don't think that will disappear, because these would be totally autonomous companies without any people working in them, and it's hard to see how that could happen or work."



2

AI for What's Next

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is fast-approaching. As AI systems march towards human-level intelligence, boards and hiring leaders face profound questions: how far can automation go, and where must human judgment remain? The future of hiring will not be about choosing between man or machine, but about designing a partnership that preserves authenticity, ethics, and strategic foresight.



We need to understand and leverage the power of AI so that they cannot replace us. To always manage them. Making an AI our assistant, not our boss."

Mia Zhou, Director, Amrop China.



In one scenario, society continues to put organic human authenticity front and center, even if a candidate uses AI in preparatory phases, as now. The other sees the advent of the AI avatar.

Costa Tzavaras, Director, Amrop Global Programs



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Mikael Norr, Amrop Global Board Member



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Artificial eyes are opening

When can we expect wider, human-level AGI (Artificial General Intelligence)?

One recent analysis has suggested a 50% probability of its arrival between 2040 and 2061.⁴ The exponential rise of AI has been fueled by transformer-based large language models (LLMs): the technology powering chatbots and image generators. AGI is now a matter of 'when' not 'if'.

"The robots will learn, of course, in the different scenarios," Job Voorhoeve reflects. "They will think like a human being in a sense. But there are still too many complex variables to put into the robot for now. It probably won't be possible for 20 years." Are humans at risk of AGI? "I'm not sure," says Mia Zhou, a Director of Amrop China. "If someday AI can create the emotional attachment, it will be dangerous."

In 1942, Isaac Asimov penned three laws to ensure a robot would act in a way safe and beneficial to humans. The first dictated that it should not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human to come to harm. But the laws contained a contradiction. "To protect an individual, the robot could theoretically destroy humankind," says Oana Ciornei. This led to Asimov's later, fourth law: a robot may not harm humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.

Asimov's laws have provided a foundational framework for AI. "They are applicable in today's entire system," notes Oana Ciornei. "Now you can have an AI supervising an AI — the agentic AI is the biggest change." This is why we must not over-delegate or relinquish control. "We need to understand and leverage the power of AI so that they cannot replace us," says Mia Zhou. "To always manage them. Making an AI our assistant, not our boss."

Am I a robot?

What is the future of C-suite recruitment with AI? Costa Tzavaras foresees a fork in the road between 2040 and 2061. "In one scenario, society continues to put organic human authenticity front and center, even if a candidate uses AI in preparatory phases, as now. The other sees the advent of the AI avatar. It knows my brain and my preferences, my thinking and answers, and we accept that."

This leads to the core question: "What does it mean to be authentic?" But avatars would need to be input with constantly aligned data to replicate a human, and human nature makes this difficult. "If a person is extremely consistent during their entire life you will be able to re-create them with an AI. This is the beauty of humans," says Oana Ciornei. "It's another form of knowledge transfer."

In scenario 2, could we imagine an organization entirely populated by AIs, their boardrooms devoid of people? Mikael Norr doesn't believe that this is a realistic scenario. "Companies where everyone, including the CEO, the chairman of the board and the whole management team, is an AI robot? The human touch is super important."

Stepping out from behind the screen will probably remain the most valuable piece of the senior executive hiring process



The machines will leap, but they won't lead

In this series, we've stressed the importance of the live interview in global executive recruitment. Whilst the Amrop Partners agree that the human remains the ultimate guardian of such an exchange, the machine might play a bigger role in the future. "There could be one robot avatar on the candidate side and two on the agent side, with people to support," muses Job Voorhoeve. "Would we put those three together to discuss with each other, and watch the exchange? The key issue will then be around eliminating hallucination and assuring high quality modeling and simulation cases."

What about physical robots? "The current stage of AI is more like having their own brain," says Mia Zhou. "When the AIs have their own bodies, see and talk, it could be like a colleague. I think someday they will be all around us." Job Voorhoeve: "Robots to make life easy, like mowing your grass."

Nonetheless, stepping out from behind the screen will probably remain the most valuable piece of the senior executive hiring process, says Costa Tzavaras. "It removes the risk around AI: *now we're going to speak human to human, brain to brain.*"

For Jamal Khan, AI is a long way from replacing the human in executive search. Recruitment markets that deal in purely operational or technical skills are "rife for disruption, and you could automate pretty much the whole process," he admits. But senior hiring is a far more subtle affair. "You're still going to need the relationship, judgment about cultural fit, the meet and greet, areas to probe." He hopes the more pedestrian aspects of executive search can be eliminated by AI, with even live interviewing limited to the final candidates. "So again, it's just expediting the process. It should make things quicker, with more data and insights."

Scrutiny cuts both ways, says Oana Ciornei. Not only should CEOs be rigorously assessed, they must also be allowed to form their own judgment about a hiring organization; to get a live sense of the people and the environment they will be stepping into.

Job Voorhoeve returns to online visibility. The best executives, already elusive, will become reclusive. "The really talented people will make sure you cannot touch them. Your own data will need to be much better protected. So contact will be increasingly based on reputation. That will be the most important thing."

From smart to wise, reasonable to responsible

"Many people want the silver bullet and hope that AI will be that, but it's not so easy," says Mikael Norr. "And meanwhile, we need to carry on with what we do together, help each other, and be inclusive and caring. And that is probably even more important today."

On a final note, let's recall Amrop's core premise: ethical, ecological and societal challenges call for executives who are not just accomplished and smart, but wise. Smart leaders become wise when they address and resolve the dilemmas of modern business in a holistic way.

Conclusion

AI should not only create and capture economic value, but create more sustainable and legitimate organizations.

Wise leadership acknowledges its qualities, whilst emphasizing human gifts. Not attempting to compete with computers, but developing people's creativity, discernment, fairness and social collaboration.

Safeguarding a holistic vision of the future.



About the contributors

This series has been based on in-person interviews with the following Amrop partners and practitioners.



Oana Ciornei

Member of the Amrop Global Board and Digital Practice



Jamal Khan

Managing Partner, Australia



Mikael Norr

Managing Partner, Sweden and Member of the Amrop Global Board



Costa Tzavaras

Director, Amrop Global Programs



Job Voorhoeve

Leader of the Amrop Global Digital Practice



Mia Zhou

Director, China



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³ Digitization on Boards 7th Edition. Amrop Global Digital Practice.

⁴ Afifi-Sabet, K., (March 8, 2025). AGI could now arrive as early as 2026 — but not all scientists agree. Livescience.com.

Further reading from the Amrop desk

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Recruiting the Digital Leaders for What's Next. Job Voorhoeve.

Survival of the Fittest Part 6: the CIO. (2024). Amrop



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About Amrop

The Amrop Partnership is a premium leadership and executive search consultancy with 69 offices in 56 countries and a global team of more than 560 professionals.

We help our clients find and develop Leaders For What's Next.

Shaping sustainable success is our mission, craft and passion.

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