DO GOOD TO LEAD WELL

WITH CRAIG DOWDEN, PHD

Geoff Woods

Craig Dowden

Episode: The Ai-Driven Leader with Bestselling Author Geoff Woods

What You'll Learn

- ✓ Navigating Fear and Anxiety in AI Adoption
- ✓ Using AI to Enhance Strategic Planning
- ✓ Building an AI-Driven Organization
- ✓ The Role of Empathy in Leadership
- ✓ Ethics and AI: Navigating Sensitive Information

Navigating Fear and Anxiety in AI Adoption

Fear of AI replacing jobs or disrupting workflows is natural, but leaders must address it with empathetic strength. Segmenting teams into growth-minded individuals (excited about AI) and fixed-minded individuals (resistant due to fear) is a helpful first step. Growth-minded team members thrive when challenged to use AI to amplify their strengths, such as asking, "How can AI help me do this 10x better?" Fixed-minded individuals need reassurance and structured onboarding. By pairing AI with human strengths, leaders transform anxiety into opportunity.

Action Steps:

Identify Mindset Groups: Categorize your team into growth-minded and fixed-minded individuals.

Assign AI Challenges: For growth-minded team members, ask: "What high-value task could AI help you improve by 10x?"

Hands-On Training: For fixed-minded team members, demo AI tools using their actual work (e.g., use CRIT to co-create a system for their tasks).

Set Standards: Communicate that AI adoption is non-negotiable but frame it as a growth opportunity: "We're here to enhance your skills, not replace them."

Using AI to Enhance Strategic Planning

AI transforms strategic planning from a rigid exercise into a dynamic, data-driven process.

Geoff shares how AI can "interview" leaders to uncover blind spots and refine business plans. For example, a real estate investor used AI to challenge his house-flipping strategy, leading him to pivot to multifamily properties, a decision that unlocked $1M in equity overnight.

By leveraging AI as a thought partner, leaders gain clarity on long-term vision (e.g., 10-year goals) and short-term execution (e.g., quarterly KPIs). AI's ability to analyze vast datasets and simulate scenarios ensures strategies are both ambitious and actionable.
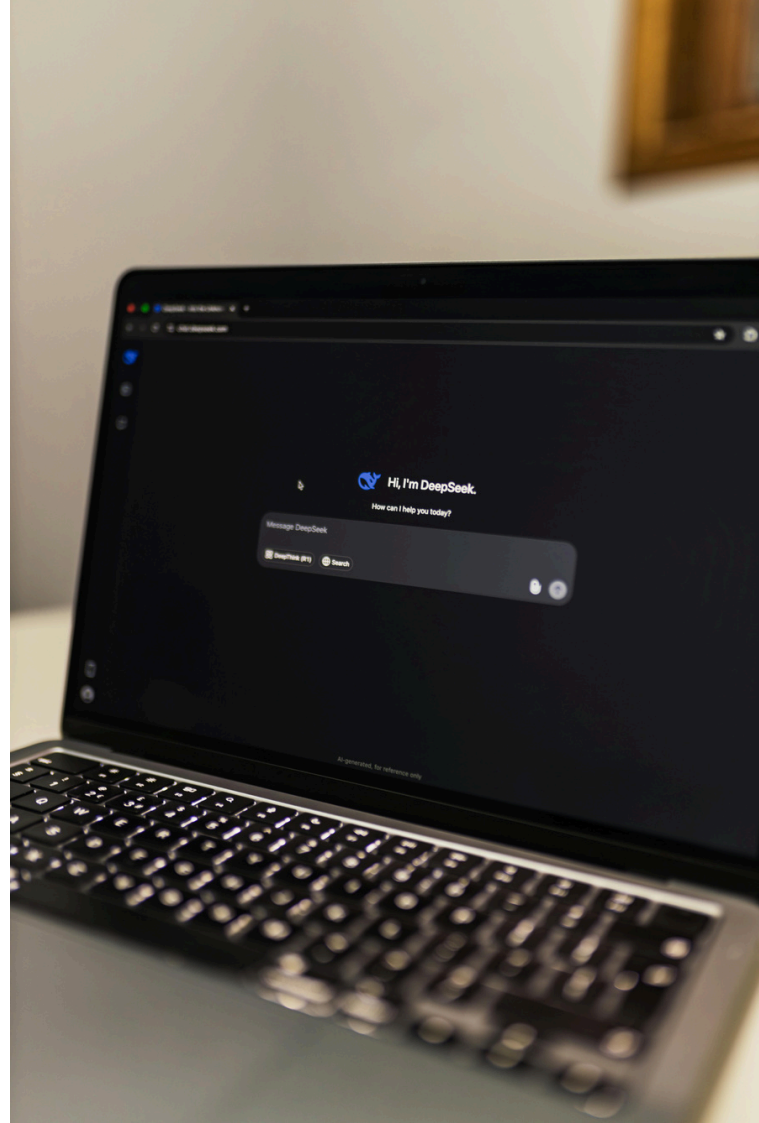

Action Steps:

Define Your Vision: Write down your 10-year vision and 1-year goals.

Use the CRIT Framework: Ask AI to act as a board member by prompting: Context, Role, Interview, Task.

Build AI Systems: Create custom AI tools (e.g., GPTs) to automate strategic tasks like product-market fit analysis.

Test and Iterate: Present AI-generated insights to your team for feedback: "What did we miss? What feels unaligned?"
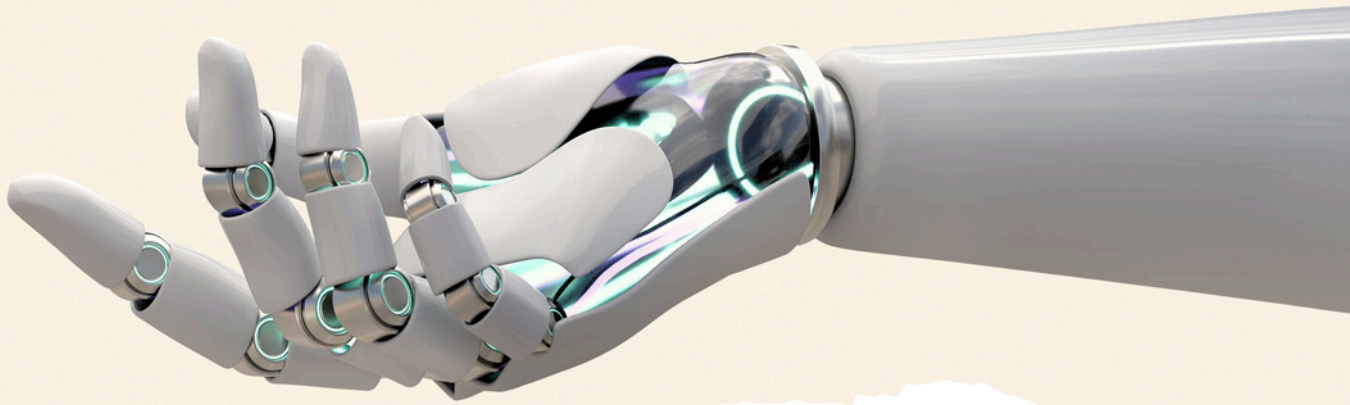
Building an AI-Driven Organization

An AI-driven organization thrives on empathetic strength, balancing vision with compassion. Leaders must set a clear standard: all team members are expected to integrate AI into their workflows daily. This isn't about perfection but progress. Provide training, resources, and psychological safety to experiment. For example, non-technical team members can use AI to design systems (e.g., a customer experience tool built without coding). Hiring for AI curiosity is critical: screen candidates for openness to AI during interviews by asking, "How have you used AI to improve your work?"

Action Step:

Set a Zero-Excuses Standard: Require all team members to use AI tools daily; provide training and resources to build confidence.

Hire for AI Mindset: Prioritize candidates who demonstrate enthusiasm for learning and applying AI, even if they lack technical expertise.

Build Custom AI Tools: Use platforms like ChatGPT to create internal tools (e.g., a Slack bot for customer feedback analysis) that align with your team's unique needs.

Lead by Example: Share your own AI use cases weekly (e.g., "This email template was refined using AI") to normalize experimentation and foster a culture of innovation.

By embedding AI into daily workflows and nurturing a growth mindset, organizations unlock exponential value while empowering employees to focus on high-impact, creative tasks.

The Role of Empathy in Leadership

Empathy is the cornerstone of guiding teams through AI's transformative potential. Geoff Woods acknowledges that not every leader naturally excels at empathy at scale, and that's okay! The key is to recognize where you might need support and delegate that responsibility to others on your team who thrive in empathetic roles. By pairing strength (setting clear standards for AI adoption) with compassion (supporting team members through transitions), leaders create an environment where innovation and trust coexist. Instead of enforcing AI use rigidly, frame it as an opportunity for growth: "Let's explore how AI can amplify your strengths and free up time for work that energizes you." This approach fosters buy-in and reduces resistance.

Identify Empathy Opportunities: Reflect on where your team might need extra support during AI integration (e.g., training, role adjustments).

Empower Empathetic Team Members: Partner with colleagues who naturally excel at connecting with others to co-lead change initiatives.

Create Safe Spaces for Dialogue: Host regular "AI Q&A" sessions where team members can voice concerns, share wins, and ask questions without judgment.

Combine Clarity with Compassion: Pair clear expectations ("Let's commit to using AI tools daily") with resources and encouragement ("I'll provide training and celebrate your progress").

By prioritizing empathy, leaders not only ease the transition to AI but also build a culture where team members feel valued, heard, and excited to grow alongside technology. This balance of strength and compassion turns AI adoption into a collaborative, uplifting journey rather than a top-down mandate.

Ethics and AI: Navigating Sensitive Information

Ethical AI use hinges on transparency and data security. Geoff advises against using off-the-shelf AI tools for sensitive data (e.g., financial statements) unless they explicitly state they don't train on user data (e.g., ChatGPT Teams, Copilot, Claude). He stresses that leaders must prioritize ethical frameworks: "We don't use AI to replace people; we use it to enhance them." This includes avoiding tools that commoditize human labor and instead focusing on AI's role in eliminating repetitive tasks, freeing employees for creative, high-impact work.

Action Step:

Choose Secure Tools: Use enterprise-grade AI platforms (e.g., ChatGPT Teams) that guarantee data privacy.

Establish Ethical Guidelines: Draft an AI policy stating: "AI is used to empower employees, not replace them."

Audit for Bias: Regularly review AI outputs for ethical risks (e.g., discriminatory language, data privacy breaches).

Educate Teams: Host workshops on ethical AI use, emphasizing transparency and accountability.

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- **Website**
- **LinkedIn**

For a deeper dive, listen to the full-length episode of the Do Good to Lead Well podcast featuring Geoff Woods on:

- **Spotify**
- **Apple Podcasts**

And if you're looking to elevate your entire C-Suite leadership team, learn how Craig Dowden can help your leaders perform at their highest level.

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