

THE DISRUPTOR

People, Culture, and AI: Thriving Together



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Artificial intelligence dominates boardrooms, media, and product roadmaps. But the true disruptor isn't the technology itself, but in how organizations redesign their ways of working and adopt new practices to thrive in the emerging era of agentic AI.

At Ascendion, we take pride in being an AI-first engineering solutions company, and our new services model reflects that identity. Built on consistency, transparency, and a passion for outcomes, it helps clients accelerate transformation with clarity and confidence.

Our services and solutions differentiate us by reducing reliance on human-heavy approaches and accelerating agentic processes at speed. But evolution requires more than a platform. Ascendion's true advantage lies in our people, culture, and commitment - a distinctive way of working that fuels resilience, career growth, and lasting networks of craft masters.

Making AI Competence Strategic

At Ascendion, we've integrated AI competence into our company-wide KPIs. It's a performance rating modifier and promotional imperative. We're not asking Ascenders to become AI engineers - but we are making AI fluency and integration a core part of how contribution is defined.

We define AI competence as learning and applying AI to elevate your work, reframe business cases, and help others succeed. For some, that means solving problems more intelligently. For others, it's automating a workflow, designing a concept in seconds, or guiding colleagues to frame the right challenge for an agentic system to solve.

AI competence is not just an addition to results, skills, and knowledge. It determines whether AI becomes a disruptive threat or an enabling force. In our culture, it is the integrator that reveals who is future-ready versus merely present-effective.



Culture as the Critical Layer

Culture is the critical layer for AI adoption and innovation. You can deploy the most powerful models, but without trust, empathy, and service, progress stalls. And no matter the profession, people gravitate toward familiar tools and comfortable methods – breakthroughs only stick when culture enables them.

Ascendion has created a vibrant Culture Playbook. It's not an HR artifact sitting on the sidelines – it's a living blueprint for everyday behaviors that celebrate our agentic capabilities, values, heroes, legends, rituals, and incentives.

In the agentic era, where adaptability defines impact, the Culture Playbook ignites continuous learning, rapid adaptation, resilience, and accountability.



Inclusion and Learning at Scale

One of the biggest risks in momentous change is inequity: who adapts quickly, and who gets left behind? The traditional mentorship model (waiting for the perfect coach or sponsor to appear or be assigned) isn't built for this pace of pivoting.

AI shifts this by making mentorship ubiquitous, flowing through tools, platforms, and networks. A podcast, a demo, or even a free AI course can spark confidence and growth.

Equity is no longer just a value - it's a fearless advantage.



Leadership in the Agentic Era

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Leadership in the future of work carries new weight. Ratings and bonuses may measure outputs, but role-modeling greatness in the face of extreme shifts changes lives.

The influence leaders carry today defines the environment in which agentic reinvention either accelerates or fails. Conversations about AI 'taking jobs' should not be dismissed – but they should not be the closing statement.





At Ascendion, our motto is simple: **“You’re not going to lose your job to AI, but you’re definitely going to lose your job to someone who knows AI.”**

That’s why leadership must lean in. Training people to lead with agentic AI - showing how it boosts productivity, creates AI-human partnerships and gains competitive edge - is where leadership finds its deepest meaning.

- **Curiosity is a mandate.** Leaders must demonstrate their own experimentation with AI. Doing so signals that adaptability is now the real measure of strength.
- **Inspiration is pragmatic.** It doesn’t require a TED Talk. Sometimes it’s just showing your team the imperfect experiment you tried - and why it matters.
- **Authenticity is essential.** In a noisy world, honest, realistic guidance builds trust and gives direction.
- **Inclusion is strategy in action.** If inequity is the risk, diverse experiences and identities hold the solution.

Human Ingenuity Meets Agentic AI

Human ingenuity - human expertise in the loop - amplified by agentic AI is the defining opportunity of our time.

Efficiency from Ascendion’s faster, enterprise-grade, intelligent, and cost-effective AAVA™ platform is an industry-validated breakthrough. Yet the most profound gains are human: saving patients’ lives, unlocking opportunities for working families, and accelerating creative innovation in gaming, music, and beyond.

AI without people is powerful but misdirected. People without AI are inventive but limited. Together, they generate something exponential: scale with empathy, intelligence with heart.

That is the opportunity of Ascendion’s talent transformation methodology in the agentic era: to design a workforce, a culture, and a model of competence where people and AI don’t just coexist — they thrive, together.



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About the Author

Alice Leclair is the Head of Talent, Culture, and Organizational Performance at Ascendion, where she leads people strategies that power business growth and transformation. She specializes in enabling talent development, shaping culture, and strengthening leadership to drive organizational performance on a global scale.

Alice is committed to creating workplaces where people and business outcomes thrive together, balancing financial impact with employee experience and social value.

Ascendion is an AI-powered software engineering leader. We serve over 400 global clients with software engineering, cloud, data, experience design, and workforce transformation solutions. Powered by +11,000 Ascenders around the world, a bold culture, and our proprietary Engineering (Engineering to the Power of AI) approach, we help businesses unlock value, accelerate growth, and impact lives. Headquartered in New Jersey, Ascendion combines scale, agility, and ingenuity to engineer what's next. Learn more at ascendion.com.

