

Executive Talent in the Era of AI

What AI Demands of Your Leaders and Your Next Hire

A Guide for Investors & PE-Backed Business Leaders



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Where should AI ownership sit? What capabilities should you look for in your next executive hire? And how should your leadership team adapt as AI changes the work itself? This collection brings together JM Search's perspectives on the hiring, development, and organizational decisions facing investors and PE-backed business leaders, so you can better assess the leadership your organization needs next.

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Featured Insights

AI Talent Strategy

Sequencing Matters in AI Leadership: What to Get Right Before the Search

By Jamey Cummings and Ryan Gilligan

Making the most of AI requires the right person at the helm, but the process of finding that leader starts well before a formal search. Our experts share four decisions executives need to make before kicking off a search: identifying the firm's AI objectives, determining which team should own AI efforts, outlining an ideal leader profile, and considering how an AI leader's role will evolve in the future.

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The AI Leadership Paradox (Part 1): Hiring for a Role That Doesn't Yet Exist

By Bill Hogenauer

The pressure to hire AI leadership is growing, but the profile of the right leader is continually taking shape. For PE firms, the challenge becomes more complex when the mandate spans companies with different cultures, tech stacks, and levels of AI maturity. If your search feels stuck, the job description may be part of the problem. Explore how to define a role that reflects your business priorities and attracts viable candidates.

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Featured Insights

AI Talent Strategy

The AI Leadership Paradox (Part 2): Hiring Without a Playbook

By **Bill Hogenauer**

Who has strong AI leaders, where did they find them, and what makes those candidates effective? CEOs and investors are asking these questions as they navigate an emerging talent market. Drawing on our AI leadership searches, we explore how to distinguish hands-on experience from surface-level fluency, assess the qualities that help leaders adapt, and focus your search on backgrounds that match your company's desired outcomes.

Read the insights 



Featured Insights

AI Across the C-Suite

What CFOs Are Learning as AI Moves from Experimentation into Everyday Finance (Part 1)

By Felix Korostin, Michael Banks, and Matt Quinn

When AI turns days of finance work into minutes, the next challenge is deciding what your team does with that capacity. We recently spoke with our network of CFOs, including Wunderkind's Fabrizio Ferronato, about how they are accelerating everyday workflows while maintaining discipline around data, human judgment, and spending. Explore where AI is making a practical difference, and how finance leaders are deciding which applications deserve to scale.

[Read the insights](#)



What CFOs Are Learning as AI Changes How Finance Talent Develops (Part 2)

By Felix Korostin, Michael Banks, and Matt Quinn

As AI reshapes how finance teams work, companies need to rethink how they evaluate and develop talent. Familiarity with AI tools is only part of the picture; candidates also need the judgment to challenge outputs and connect analysis to business decisions. Explore what this means for your next finance hire, how early-career employees build business acumen as foundational work changes, and the capabilities that may become more important at the CFO level.

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AI Across the C-Suite

AI Adoption Is a People Leadership Mandate

By Dave Cochran and Charles Telep

CTOs and CIOs cannot drive successful AI adoption alone. Turning new tools into better ways of working also requires employee trust, clear expectations, and leadership through change. For CEOs and boards, that makes the CHRO's involvement essential from the start. Explore how People leaders are helping translate AI strategy into everyday behavior – and what your organization needs to support responsible, sustained adoption.



The New Legal Frontier: How CLOs Are Shaping AI Governance and Redefining the Role of Legal

By Thanh Nguyen

AI adoption is expanding what businesses need from their General Counsel and Chief Legal Officer. From employees' use of AI to the development of new products, legal leaders are helping shape decisions that reach well beyond compliance. For boards and CEOs evaluating legal talent, the implications are significant. Explore why strategic judgment, cross-functional collaboration, and the ability to connect governance with business goals are becoming central to the role.



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AI Across the C-Suite

Your CTO Is Thinking a Lot About AI. It's Time to Put the Plan into Action.

By Bill Hogenauer

Your CTO is stretched across infrastructure, security, product roadmaps, and a dozen other priorities. Most CTOs are advocating for their companies to build and execute AI strategies, but they cannot do it alone. Developing an AI program isn't a side project; it demands focused attention and expertise. If your AI efforts are struggling to move beyond pilots, explore the barriers that may be holding them back – and two leadership profiles worth considering to turn strategy into execution.

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Featured Insights

AI by Industry

Reimagining the Future of Healthcare: Outpatient Care, AI, and Regulation Take Center Stage in Nashville

By Kevin Kuzmick

For healthcare leaders, AI's potential comes with a practical challenge: improving care delivery without adding complexity. Drawing on Nashville Healthcare Sessions, Partner and Healthcare Services Team lead Kevin Kuzmick reflects on how AI, the shift toward outpatient care, and regulatory pressures are reshaping the sector. Explore what these intersecting trends could mean for your operating model, from reducing administrative burden to making better use of patient data.



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Hiring an AI Leader in Retail Is Uncharted Territory. Here's the Map.

By Heidi Rustin, Jim Ipema, and Ryan Gilligan

For retailers that built ecommerce leadership roles 25 years ago – before a clear talent pool existed – the AI era is a movie they've seen before. With AI reaching from customer experience to supply chain operations, expecting one executive to lead every aspect of transformation can make your search more difficult. Explore three emerging leadership profiles and how to determine the combination of technical, transformation, and product expertise your business needs.



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AI by Industry

Retail Is Getting More Human: 5 Takeaways from the Women in Retail Leadership Summit

By Heidi Rustin

As AI reshapes retail, customer trust and human connection remain central to how brands compete. Partner Heidi Rustin reflects on five themes from a recent Women in Retail Leadership (WIRL) Summit, from balancing familiarity with personalization to helping employees navigate AI-driven change. Explore what these shifts mean for how you serve customers, recognize emerging opportunities, and lead your team with empathy and clarity.



Digital Transformation in Legal Services: What Cloud and AI Adoption Mean for Talent

By Dan Figueroa and Derrick Stewart

AI is pushing many legal services firms to move beyond legacy infrastructure, but the implications extend well beyond IT. Cloud migration can reshape cost structures, affect EBITDA, and change what your business needs from technology leadership. Explore why capturing value requires executives who can manage the transition, take ownership of the technology roadmap, and connect investment decisions to measurable business outcomes.



Featured Insights

AI by Industry

Sports Has Adopted AI. The Leadership Model Hasn't Caught Up.

By Curtis Walker and Ryan Gilligan

For sports organizations, AI is as much a leadership and culture challenge as a technology initiative. As adoption expands, how do you establish clear ownership while preserving the creativity and personal relationships your business relies on? Drawing on conversations with presidents, CHROs, and other sports leaders, we explore five priorities for moving beyond scattered pilots and making AI part of a coordinated operating strategy.

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AI in Fintech Dealmaking: Why Patience Pays Off

By Sanjay Sama

AI adoption is a long game, but your firm still needs evidence that its investments are moving in the right direction. For PE investors in fintech, opportunities span deal sourcing, due diligence, and portfolio monitoring. Based on conversations with PE operating partners, we explore where AI is proving useful, how to build on early wins, and which indicators can help you assess progress before financial returns are fully visible.

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Featured Insights

AI in Executive Recruiting

AI in Executive Recruiting: Where Technology Enhances and Judgment Defines

When your next executive hire is critical to the business, faster research and a broader candidate pool are valuable, but so is understanding how a candidate will lead in your organization. AI is helping advance the search process, while candid references, leadership assessment, and sensitive transitions still depend on experienced judgment. Explore how JM Search brings technology and human expertise together to help you make a more informed hiring decision.

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Connect with Our Experts



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About JM Search

Recruiting the next generation of C-Suite leaders.

JM Search is the leading retained executive search firm for private equity, and other growth-oriented private and public organizations.

With over 45 years of experience, our partners are immersed in your search every step of the way, supported by a passionate, cohesive team of recruiting experts. With deep sector and functional-specific expertise, our partners have built expansive professional networks from decades of firsthand experience to ensure the best possible outcomes for our clients and their businesses.

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years recruiting
C-suite executives
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of clients are
PE firms &
their portfolio
companies

85%

of clients hire
us for multiple
searches

95%

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