Craig Horton Advisory

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Who owns the work when the workforce is part human, part agent?

Excellent change management delivers 88% success against 13% for poor CM. Workforce are now part human, part agent, with no one accountable for the outcome.

By Craig Horton, AI Transformation Advisor · Friday 3 July 2026 · brief.craighortonadvisory.com

The lead

Two signals this week, and together they tell the same story.

The first, from Gartner's warning to CHROs, is about false savings.

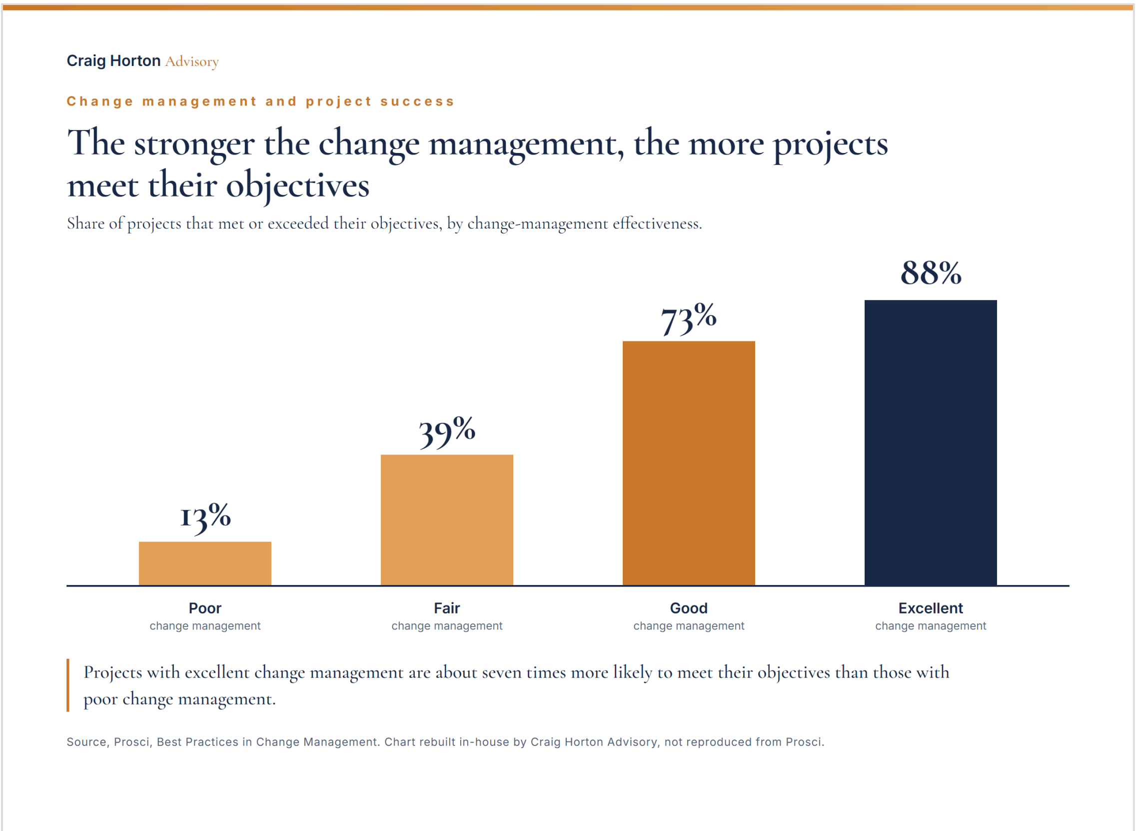
Replacing people with AI may look efficient from a business case perspective, but the real cost often returns later. Gartner cited figures from Forrester and Robert Half showing that more than half of executives who replaced people with AI expect to regret that decision within eighteen months, and almost a third of companies that cut roles because of AI have already hired them back.

That is the price of treating AI as a headcount exercise rather than an operating-model redesign.

The second signal is Prosci's research that 88% of excellent change programmes met or exceeded their objectives, compared with just 13% of poor ones.

The lesson is that technology does not do the change by itself. You need to redesign your operating and business model, with clear guidelines, ownership and governance.

If your agentic AI transformation is going to create real value, the change needs an owner, a budget, clear governance and leadership attention.



> The org chart still shows who reports to whom, but it was never drawn to show how work actually gets done.

From the desk

This week, an agentic HR programme for a billion-euro company was run through the AI BVF.

The tool used, aibvf-mcp, acts as a safety checkpoint before it recommends a project. It scores the idea on four tests:

- Does it fit the strategy?
- Does it make money?
- Are people ready to use it?
- Is it safe and legal?

Then it returns one of three answers: Stop, Fix or Accelerate.

This example came back as Fix, held back by the people test, because there was no funded owner for the human side of the project.

This is the same variable Prosci's chart measures, and the reason the AI BVF has Prosci benchmarks built into the code.

The platform is open on the MCP registry as aibvf-mcp version 0.6.0, at github.com/Bahamas1717/ai-bvf.

The four AI BVF tests ask whether a project is worth doing. The harder question is: who owns the work once it starts?

On the radar

- AI-attributed job cuts keep climbing, and the chief executives at JPMorgan, Citi and Goldman are now naming AI directly as a driver of workforce reductions, heaviest across technology and finance (Challenger and Insurance Journal, 2 July).
- North America is still the laggard on adoption, with 52 percent of employers not yet using AI in HR in any form while APAC runs well ahead (HCA Mag, 2 July).
- The EU AI Act reaches employment on 2 August, when Annex III brings recruitment, screening and employment decisions under high-risk obligations, the first test of whether workplace AI has proper ownership, evidence and governance (artificialintelligenceact.eu).

Same outcome, different name attached to it now. The old phrase was restructuring, the new phrase is AI.

And when chief executives start naming AI directly, the accountability question moves from theory to operating reality. If the work is being redesigned, reduced or handed to agents, then someone has to own the consequences of that redesign.

But the agent still does the work. And when it gets that work wrong, the organisation will need a better answer than "the system did it."

The CIO may own the platform, Legal may own the regulatory interpretation, HR may own the employee and candidate impact, and the business may own the outcome, which means no single function is accountable on its own.

The reframing question

Before a role is handed to an agent, who owns what happens when that agent is wrong? And if no one can be named, what exactly has been transformed?

Sources

- Gartner, via HCA Mag, "Hidden AI costs threaten workforce ROI, Gartner warns CHROs", 30 June 2026, with Forrester and Robert Half figures cited therein
- Prosci, Best Practices in Change Management, correlation between change-management effectiveness and meeting objectives (excellent 88, good 73, fair 39, poor 13 percent); chart rebuilt in-house, not reproduced from Prosci
- Challenger, Gray & Christmas, AI-attributed job-cut data, reported 2 July 2026
- EU AI Act, Annex III high-risk obligations for employment and recruitment AI, apply from 2 August 2026 (artificialintelligenceact.eu)
- aibvf-mcp, open MIT-licensed server on the MCP registry, version 0.6.0, github.com/Bahamas1717/ai-bvf; AI BVF framework at bvf.craighortonadvisory.com