



Humanity Link



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The future of HR in Humanitarian Organizations.

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As artificial intelligence tools gain traction across every sector, the humanitarian world is grappling with a new urgency: talent. It's no longer enough to send medical kits and food packages. Soon, we'll need a cadre of professionals who understand how to deploy data analytics, design responsible

algorithms, and navigate the moral hazards that come with automated decision-making.

This shift raises questions that go beyond the latest tech headlines. Much like universities that scramble to introduce new majors when emerging fields prove indispensable, humanitarian organizations must rethink their hiring and development strategies. Consider the parallels: When cybersecurity took center stage, colleges responded with specialized degree programs. Today, as AI matures, NGOs must likewise invest in experts who can ensure that these tools serve communities rather than exploit them.

This will require money. Donors, often accustomed to strict overhead ceilings, will have to recognize that competitive salaries, research fellowships, and capacity-building workshops aren't extras—they're the new foundation. The right people won't come cheap, and training existing staff to confront AI's complexities will also take resources. But the long-term payoff is clear: More equitable resource allocation. Faster responses to crises. Data-driven insights that cut through bureaucratic inertia.

Equally important will be the right partnerships. Just as universities partner with think tanks and tech firms to ensure their curricula stay relevant, humanitarian organizations should consider alliances with data ethics labs, AI research institutes, and mission-driven startups. These collaborations can offer both the technical guidance and moral compass

needed to build systems that reflect local realities, respect cultural norms, and minimize harm. By knitting together a network of expert advisors, NGOs can develop standards and safeguards that outlast any single algorithm.

We're at the beginning of this transformation, and we should remain clear-eyed about the risks. AI can entrench biases or misallocate resources if left unchecked. That's why investing in the right talent and forging the right partnerships is essential: professionals and collaborators who understand not just the mechanics, but also the ethics. They should know when to trust an algorithm and when to override it. They need to see the people behind the data points.

If humanitarian organizations don't step up—if they fail to invest in AI-savvy talent and the alliances that empower them—they'll fall behind, losing credibility and effectiveness. On the other hand, if they adapt as universities have, updating their “majors” and building strategic partnerships to reflect new realities, they can create a workforce ready to harness technology thoughtfully. It's one thing to acknowledge that AI is coming; it's another to ensure the human wisdom that guides it.

Here's some great reading to get you started:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/generative-ai-humanitarians-september-2023>

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