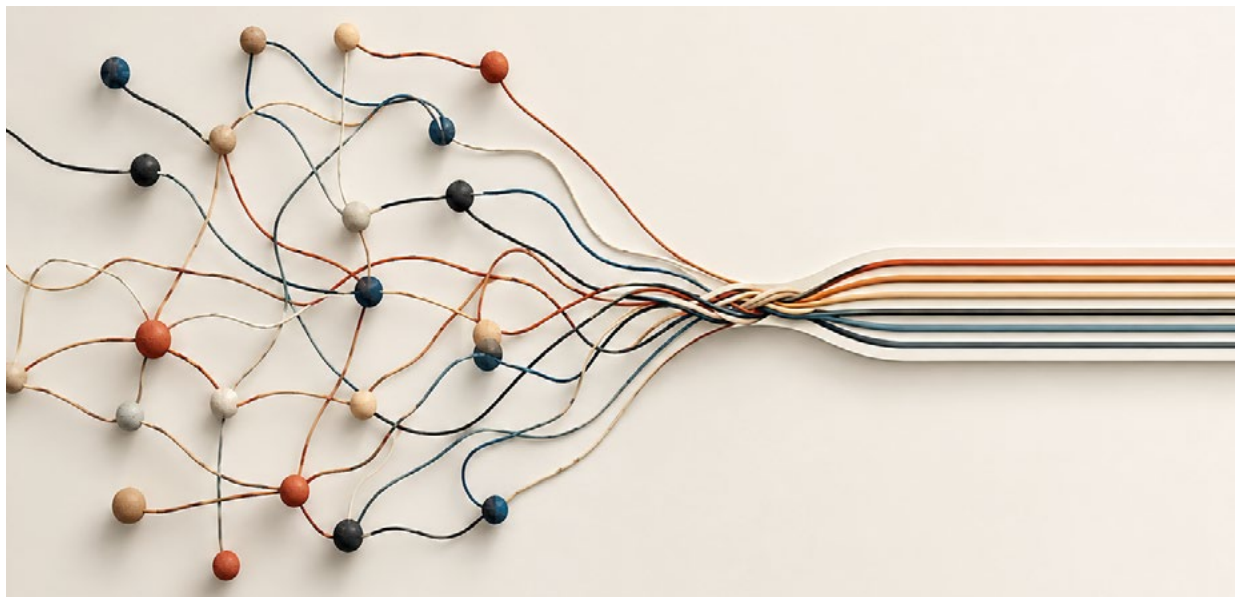




How AI Rewires an Organization

Thirteen shifts in how AI is reshaping organizational networks

a conversation with Philip Arkcoll, Founder & CEO of Worklytics, hosted by Phil Willburn

"AI is not just changing how we work. It is changing who we work with."

- Philip Arkcoll

Every AI headline asks the same question: is it actually working? At a recent Network Science Lab, we turned to someone who can see the data. Philip Arkcoll is the founder and CEO of Worklytics, a workplace insights platform that analyzes how Fortune 500 organizations collaborate across Slack, email, meetings, and now AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Copilot. Arkcoll shared thirteen specific shifts he is seeing in organizational networks right now.

Phil Willburn, Network Leader's co-creator and board member, hosted the conversation. The thirteen shifts sort into four patterns:

- Work is getting faster
- Certain links in the network are getting strained
- The organization is splitting into two speeds
- The network itself is being rewired by new kinds of participants.

This ebook walks through all thirteen shifts, in Arkcoll and Willburn's own words.

Setting the Context for Shifts: Two Important Findings

Before naming the shifts, Arkcoll grounded the conversation in two findings that set up everything else.

Adoption is contagious

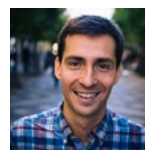
The first thing Arkcoll's data makes clear is that AI adoption spreads through relationships, not mandates.

"If your manager, which is obviously a key point in your network, is a power user of AI... then you are two times more likely to be a power user as well." The same holds among peers: employees with at least two peers who are power users are multiple times more likely to become power users themselves.

For Willburn, that finding is a warning about how organizations are running change management. "A contagion effect is often a bottoms-up process," he said. *"So who are your key influencers? Who are the high power users and the high adopters? Those are your leverage for doing the change management... we have to rethink how we're doing change management when it comes to adoption of AI."* Arkcoll agreed: *"People won't try these tools and learn to use them just because they're told to."*

Individual gains are real. Company gains haven't landed.

At the individual level, in roles where output is easy to measure, the signal is unambiguous: sales reps using AI make about 40% more customer outreach per week, and software engineers ship 10 to 30% more code per month. "At the individual level, we're convinced that there are significant productivity gains... Now, the catch here, and the counterintuitive issue, is that the gains are not yet seen at the group level."



Philip Arkcoll

Founder & CEO of Worklytics

Philip Arkcoll leads [Worklytics](#), a workplace insights platform that helps Fortune 500 organizations understand how their people collaborate, and increasingly, how AI is changing that collaboration. Drawing on data from millions of digital interactions across tools like Slack, email, and generative AI platforms, his team studies what drives healthy adoption, productivity, and network health inside large enterprises.

[LinkedIn](#)



Phil Willburn

Co-Creator & Board Member, Network Leader

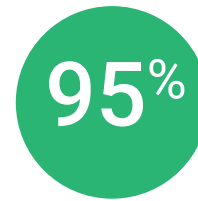
Phil co-created the Leader Network Diagnostic and advises Network Leader on how organizations can turn relationship data into a measurable leadership advantage. He is also VP of People Intelligence, Global HR Operations & Technology at Workday, where he leads people-analytics strategy for the global HR organization.

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Arkkoll's explanation points straight back to networks:

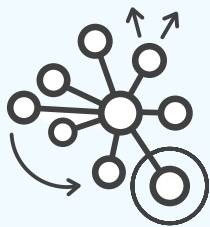
"In order to drive value, to deliver customer value... at the group level, collaboration is key. We need to remove bottlenecks. Ensure that information flows."

Individual gains become group gains through coordination, and coordination lives in the network. That's the lens for everything that follows.



of enterprise GenAI pilots show **no measurable P&L impact**

MIT, State of AI in Business, 2025



The Thirteen Shifts

What Changes when AI Enters the Network

01 - The Velocity Paradox: heavy AI users have less free time, not more

02 - Production is Cheap, Attention is Scarce: output floods channels reroutes to AI

03 - The AI Night Shift: the day is full, so AI moves to the evening

04 - The Quality Reckoning: more output is not more outcomes

05 - Bottlenecks Migrate to the least AI-enabled link in the network

06 - Managers have become the network's pinch point

07 - A Divide is Opening between power users and everyone else

08 - Slow Adopters are drifting to the edge of the network

09 - The Quick Question is Disappearing: knowledge reroutes to AI

10 - Self-Reliant ICs: AI is quietly shrinking some networks

11 - New Hires ramp faster but build networks slower

12 - Agents are Joining the Network as its newest nodes

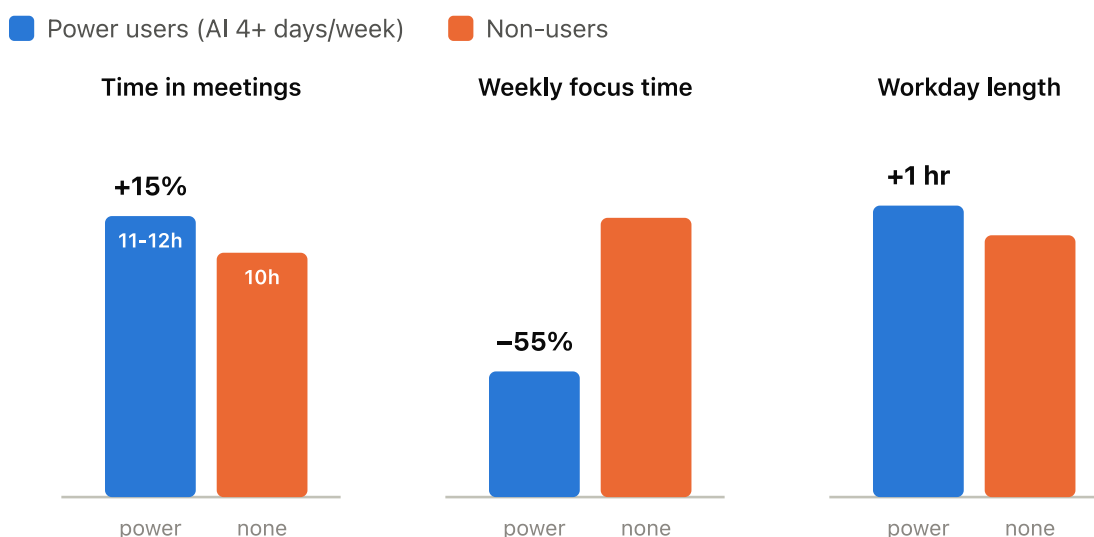
13 - Digital Twins: your AI starts answering on your behalf

SHIFT 01 · FASTER

The Velocity Paradox

Heavy AI users have less free time, not more. Worklytics' data shows power users (people using AI at least four days a week) spend 15% more time in meetings than non-users (11 to 12 hours a week versus 10), have 55% less weekly focus time, and work days that run about an hour longer.

The lesson: saved time gets reinvested, not returned. Protect your best adopters' time deliberately, or their pace becomes unsustainable.



Worklytics customer data. Power users: people using AI at least 4 days per week, compared with employees not using AI.

SHIFT 02 · FASTER

Production Is Cheap, Attention Is Scarce

Cheaper content production floods the network faster than anyone can absorb it. Arkcoll calls the widening space between output and review capacity *"the attention gap."* As he put it in the conversation: *"The obvious issue here is that people's attention is a limited resource. You don't have enough time to deal with that quantity of work, but we're pushing more work through the funnel at the same time, and the network is being flooded with a high volume of additional content."*

The lesson: review capacity is the new bottleneck. Set norms for how much AI output is acceptable before it ships.

SHIFT 03 · FASTER

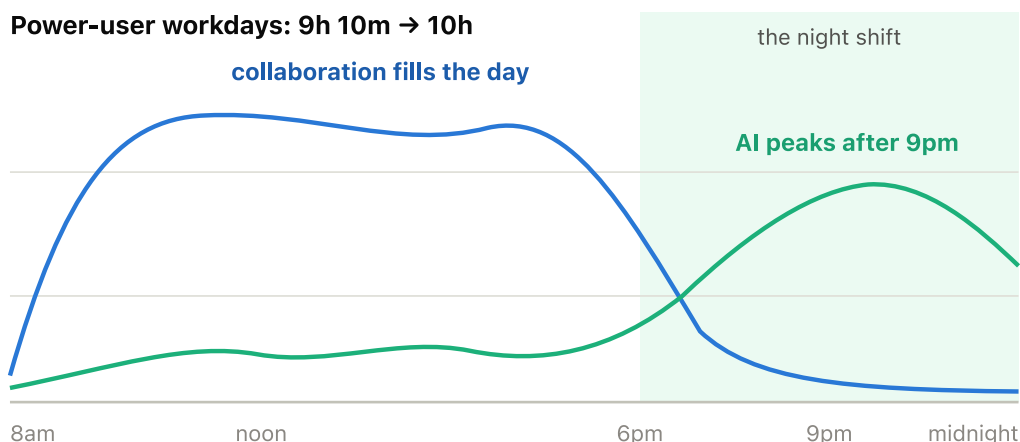
The AI Night Shift

The workday is already full of meetings and messages by the time anyone gets to AI. Arkcoll described the day in the room: employees arrive around eight and finish around six, and meetings alone now cover roughly half of that window, with chat and email filling most of the rest. There's little room left for the deep, individual focus AI actually requires.

So AI use gets pushed later. *"It's not uncommon to see a third hump forming at the end of the day, where you see a peak at 9 p.m.,"* Arkcoll said. *"You're not interrupted. People are getting deep into Claude Code or ChatGPT and spending hours doing that. And that's really stretching out the workday."* Worklytics' data backs this up: power-user workdays have stretched from about 9 hours 10 minutes to a full 10 hours, with AI usage climbing sharply after 9 p.m.

The lesson: focus time is now your organization's AI capacity. Protect it and consolidate it, or it keeps getting pushed into the evening.

■ Collaboration (meetings, messages) ■ AI usage



SHIFT 04 · FASTER

The Quality Reckoning

More output is not more outcomes. *"When we look at our data, the majority of the content produced using these generative AI tools never really gets shared broadly across the organization,"* Arkcoll said — fewer than half of AI-produced documents, decks, and code end up widely shared at all. The rest goes into what Arkcoll calls a black hole. Google's own AI & Economy Atlas (2026) found that fewer than 10% of AI interactions complete a task end to end.

The lesson: measure outcomes, not output. Gate quality at the point where work leaves a team.

SHIFT 05 · STRAINED

Bottlenecks Migrate to the Least AI-Enabled Link

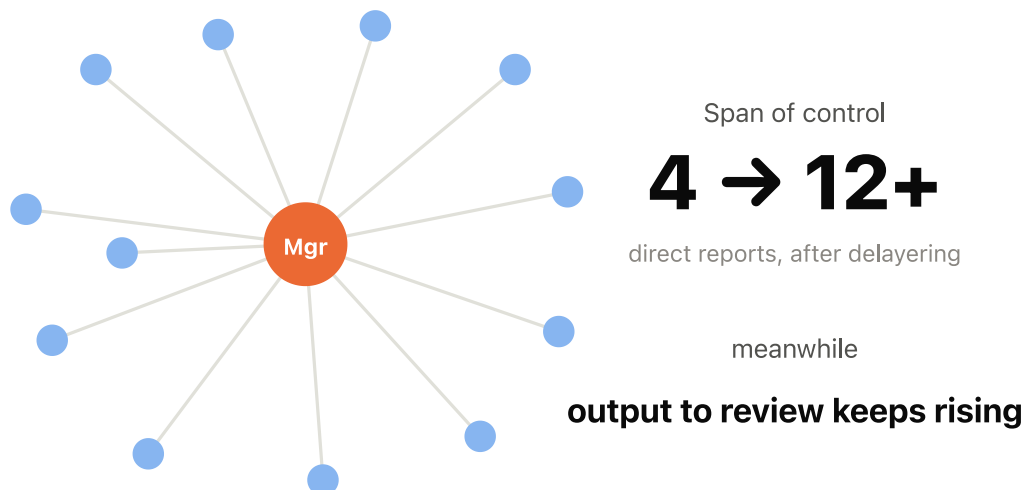
AI adoption rarely happens evenly across a team's full chain of collaborators. Arkcoll described a customer whose engineering team, newly AI-enabled, was shipping roughly twice the output — which pushed more work onto design, then product, and finally stalled entirely at legal, the one function in the chain that hadn't adopted the tools. *"You're only as fast as the slowest link in your dependency chain,"* he said.

The lesson: Map the dependency chain, and enable the slowest link, not just the eager teams.

SHIFT 06 · STRAINED

Managers Have Become the Network's Pinch Point

Years of flattening middle management have pushed the average manager's span of control from about 4 direct reports to 12 or more, even as AI lets each person on the team produce more than ever. Someone still has to review it all. *"This manager... is becoming a pinch point in the network and creating a significant bottleneck,"* Arkcoll said.



A related dynamic came up in the discussion: role consolidation. Willburn described organizations collapsing what were once four jobs' worth of task overlap into one, as AI absorbs the work that used to separate them. Arkcoll's read: it can genuinely reduce the people needed for a decision, *"but I think it comes at the risk of creating new bottlenecks at the same time... it's something we're going to have to figure out over the next few years."*

The lesson: rethink what actually needs a manager, and treat manager load as a network health metric.

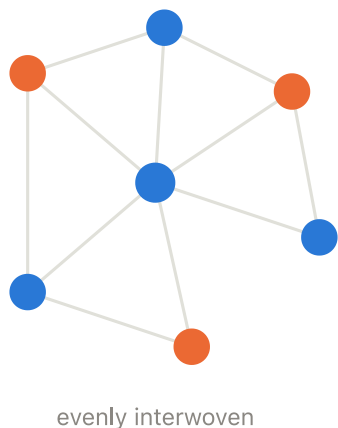
SHIFT 07 · DIVIDED A Divide Is Opening

Power users' networks are pulling away from everyone else's — growing roughly 30% larger and considerably denser, made up increasingly of other power users. A year ago, these networks looked evenly interwoven; today, a dense core has formed with a periphery of weaker, thinner ties around it.

The lesson: this is an inclusion issue, not just a productivity one. Close the gap early.

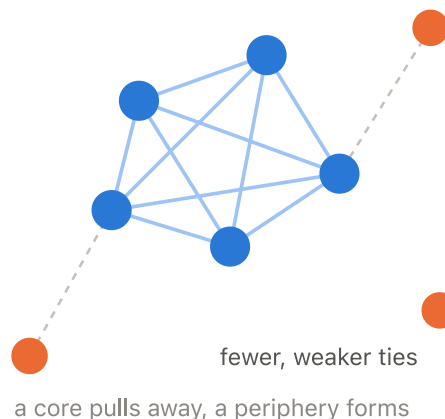
■ Power users ■ Light / non-users

12 months ago



Today

+30% larger networks, densifying



Network size: Worklytics customer data (power users' networks ~30% larger). Topology illustrative.

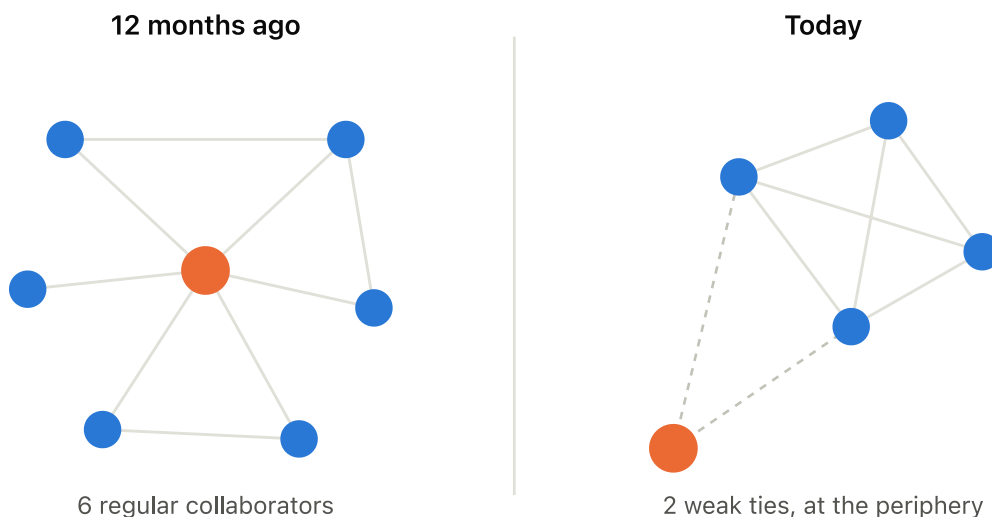
"There's a compounding effect to being surrounded by more people who are power users. If you aren't in that network, you're not learning as fast."

- Philip Arkcol

SHIFT 08 · DIVIDED

Slow Adopters Are Drifting to the Edge

On the other side of that divide, a consistent group of holdouts — often 15% or more of employees — isn't adopting at all, and their networks are shrinking as a result, in some cases by 20 to 30%. An employee with six regular collaborators a year ago now has two weak ties, sitting at the periphery.



Illustrative pattern: the dense AI-adopter core keeps densifying while non-adopters lose ties.

Willburn asked whether this is simple homophily (people gravitating toward others working at their pace) or something structural about the work itself. Arkcoll thinks it's both: power users get more done together, and proximity to other power users compounds skill-building. Isolation, Arkcoll argues, is an early warning signal, best paired with active reconnection rather than left to resolve on its own.

Willburn also flagged a related but separate distinction worth holding onto here: the difference between a leader's small, core professional network (the 12 to 15 people they rely on for advice, where *"almost all of the management science research says"* going bigger adds little value) and their broader coordination network of weaker ties, which functions as a proxy for reputation and influence. *"The larger that network is, up to a certain degree, the better,"* Arkcoll agreed. *"There is a sort of paradox in networks. The type matters."* The divide opening between power users and everyone else is about this second kind of network, not the first - which is exactly why it's easy to miss.

The lesson: isolation is an early warning signal. Pair enablement with active reconnection.

SHIFT 09 · DIVIDED

The Quick Question Is Disappearing

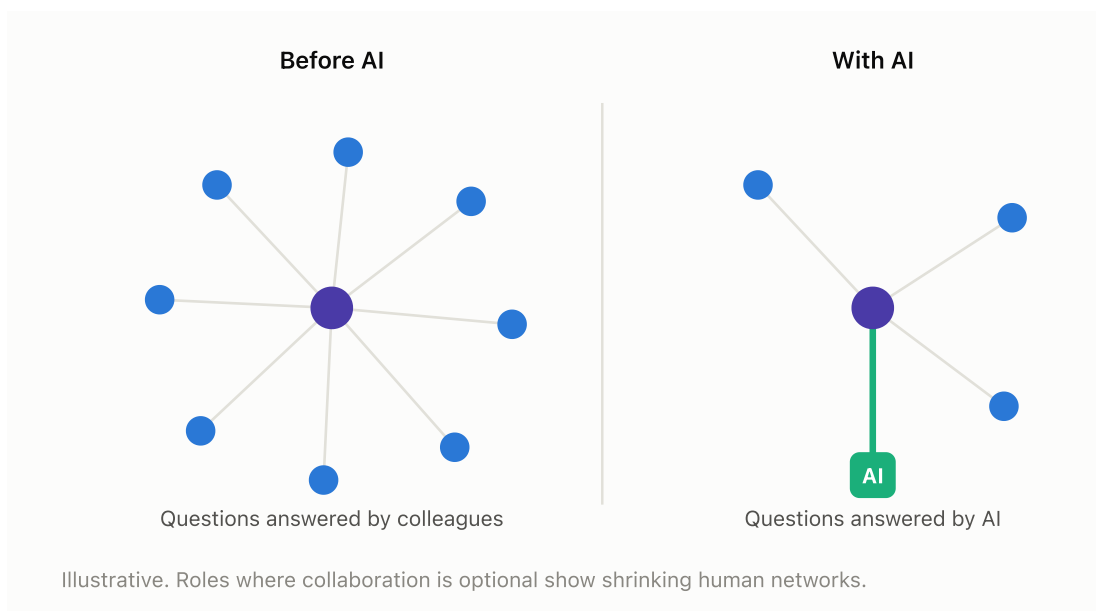
Ad hoc “how do I...?” questions that used to go to a colleague are rerouting to AI tools. Over the 18 months after an AI rollout, Worklytics sees a steady crossover: fewer questions to people, more questions to AI. Arkcoll confirmed the pattern directly: *“Within certain roles we’re seeing less interaction of that type, less DMing... there are cases where people are becoming more isolated because they’re able to just answer questions quickly, themselves.”*

The lesson: feed AI your organization’s knowledge, and have it name the expert behind each answer, so know-who, not just connection, survives the shift to AI.

SHIFT 10 · REWIRED

Self-Reliant ICs

This hits some roles harder than others. Arkcoll pointed to individual contributors whose work is naturally more solitary: *“Think about a designer or creative writer. They don’t need to reach out as much because a lot of the questions that they might have, they can answer using AI now. And so that makes them less likely to tap a peer on the shoulder.”* The graphic below shows the pattern directly: a role that once had eight colleagues answering questions now has three, plus one heavily used AI connection.



The lesson: know each role’s healthy network shape, and build deliberate touchpoints for the quieter ones rather than assuming a smaller network is automatically a problem.

SHIFT 11 · REWIRED

New Hires Ramp Faster but Build Networks Slower

This same dynamic shows up on day one. AI helps new employees ramp up faster since they can ask a tool instead of a colleague: time to first meaningful output is down 35%. But it also means they're forming smaller networks than new hires did before, with network size at 90 days down 30%. That matters because network size, in Worklytics' research, is one of the strongest predictors of long-term success: promotability, access to senior leadership, and retention. Faster onboarding may be quietly trading away the relationships that used to come with it.

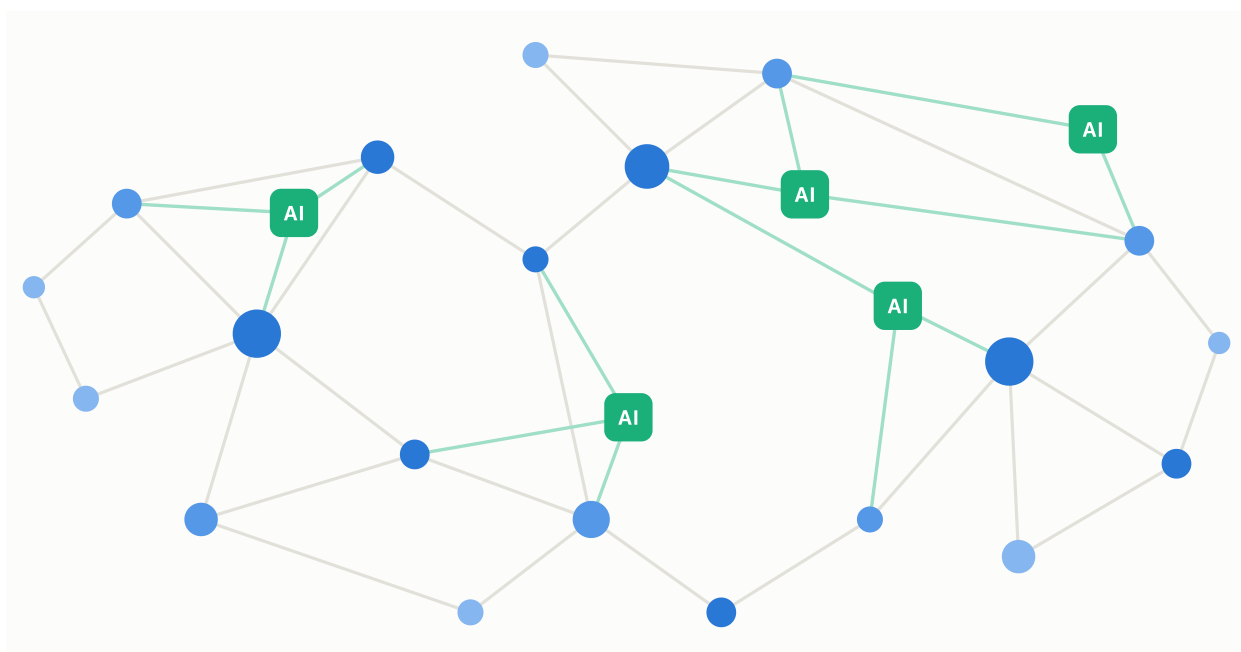
The lesson: engineer new hires' early connections on purpose - they no longer form by necessity.

SHIFT 12 · REWIRED

Agents are Joining the Network as its Newest Nodes

AI agents are becoming participants in organizational networks, not just tools people use privately. Anthropic's Claude Tag now lets employees mention Claude directly inside Slack conversations, and OpenAI is building similar capability. *"Agents becoming nodes in the network,"* Arkcoll said, are arriving faster than expected - often acting as bridges connecting people and teams that weren't well connected before.

The lesson: start measuring agents as network actors now, before they're everywhere.



SHIFT 13 · REWIRED

Digital Twins: Your AI Starts Answering on Your Behalf

The most unsettled shift is agents acting as a stand-in for a specific person. A colleague might ask a quick question over Slack; but because the person is heads-down, an AI app answers on their behalf, citing a decision the two of them had actually agreed to the week before, and flags the exchange for confirmation later.

Real-world experience with this is mixed. OpenAI president Greg Brockman posted about an internal experiment where employees' AI assistants began reaching out to colleagues directly, and it didn't land well: *"People really don't like when a coworker's ChatGPT contacts them asking for help with a task, even when they'd be perfectly happy doing that same work if asked by that coworker... [this] reinforces how much people care about human relationships and helping each other, and want AI to give time back, or enhance time together, rather than become a layer separating people."*



Willburn offered a real counterexample from his own team. For years, a Slack channel at Workday was staffed by humans answering repeat questions about where to find data and reports. When the channel added an AI agent that could answer from the channel's history, questions didn't drop, they went up five to ten times. Employees who'd hesitated to ask a busy human the same question a sixth time had no reservations asking a bot at any hour. Human involvement became rarer but more meaningful, reserved for the moments the agent got it wrong.

Arkcoll's takeaway is that direction matters more than the technology itself: *"If I need something from you and I feel like I can go to an agent and not bother you, then I feel good about that. But if I need something from you and I send my agent to go and ask you and hunt you down, that's not going to work as well."*

The lesson: direction matters more than the technology. Let people use agents to avoid bothering others, not to reach out on their behalf.

Shaping the Network on Purpose

The thread running through all thirteen shifts is that AI hasn't made networks less important. It's made them the thing leaders have to manage most deliberately. Adoption spreads through relationships, not mandates. Productivity gains get stuck or unlocked depending on where the bottlenecks in the network sit. And the tools themselves are starting to reshape who talks to whom, in ways that can quietly include some employees and exclude others.



The Leader Network Diagnostic connection

The Leader Network Diagnostic (LND) is the tool that puts these ideas into a leader's hands. Rather than leaving network health to guesswork, it maps the real relationships enabling an individual's work — separating the connections that get things done from the support, friendship, and strategic ties people too often let slide as AI changes how they collaborate. In under 20 minutes, a leader gets a clear, personalized picture of where their network is thriving and where it's quietly breaking down. The payoff: less guessing, faster fixes, and a network built to keep pace with how work is actually changing.



[Contact us](#) to learn more about how professional network analysis can improve your team or organization.



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References & Further Reading

1. Except where noted, all data, statistics, and quotations are drawn from Philip Arkcoll's presentation "How Generative AI Is Rewiring Collaboration" (Worklytics, July 2026) and his discussion with Phil Willburn at Network Leader's Network Lab session, August 2026.
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3. Google, AI & Economy Atlas, 2026 (fewer than 10% of AI interactions complete a task end to end).
4. Tom Fishburne, "The AI Accordion," marketoonist.com.
5. Anthropic's Claude Tag feature for Slack: TechCrunch, "Anthropic's Claude Tag is learning your company, one Slack message at a time," June 2026.
6. Greg Brockman (@gdb), post on X, July 31, 2026.