

AI as your personal Chief of Staff, a new operating system for modern leadership

An Article of the Swiss Association of MBAs



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Leadership today is defined by a paradox that many executives quietly recognize: expectations continue to rise, complexity accelerates, and the number of decisions increases every quarter. Yet the capacity of a leader's mind has not changed. Time remains fixed, and our attention is limited while our cognitive load has a ceiling.

In every leadership circle I participate in, AI is a recurring topic, and the same questions appear: Will it change how we work? Will it accelerate performance? Will it reshape leadership altogether?

But while many debate its implications, fewer experience the practical value it already brings. Day after day, I see it clearly, AI is not an abstract promise but rather a concrete source of leverage that will not replace leaders but expand them.

The real opportunity is simple: AI gives leaders the clarity they need to think better, and in a world defined by complexity, clarity is a competitive advantage.

AI as the modern Chief of Staff

To understand how AI elevates leadership, it helps to borrow an analogy from organizational life: the Chief of Staff role.

A strong Chief of Staff serves as a strategic extension of a leader, they filter information, highlight risks, prepare context, align priorities, and challenge assumptions. Their role is not to do the leader's work, but to create space for the leader to think at the right altitude.

This model has been reserved for a small group of senior executives. Yet the need it fulfills is quite universal. Every leader, regardless of level, faces the same challenge: too much information, too many decisions, and too little time to synthesize anything, which is precisely where AI enters the picture. AI can be your modern Chief of Staff.

Not because it automates tasks, but because it provides structure, clarity, and cognitive leverage. It helps leaders shift from doing to deciding, from reacting to preparing, and from being overloaded to being intentional. Therefore, the value is not in efficiency alone, but the value lies in elevation.

A personal journey that changed everything

My own journey with AI did not begin with engineering curiosity or technical expertise. It began with something far more practical. As a global Executive Recruiter, my work requires a constant flow of writing: assessment reports, high-stakes messages, and sensitive communications and because English is not my native language, so early in my career, these moments demanded extra effort.

At first, I used AI simply to correct my English, to refine a sentence or to adjust the tone. Over time, something interesting happened; the tool did not just fix my writing, but it also improved how I expressed ideas and accelerated how I learned. It expanded the clarity of my assessments and ultimately strengthened how I deliver value to my business leaders.

What started as a linguistic assistant slowly became a thinking partner. Later on, I built an internal AI agent to support my candidate assessments. It took no technical skills and I approached it as if I were training a junior colleague with strong potential: guiding, refining, explaining, and improving it, prompt after prompt.



The result was a 20 percent reduction in preparation time and more consistent structure across assessments for me, ie. a concrete efficiency gain. The greater impact was also cognitive as AI helped me think more clearly, synthesize faster, and prepare with more precision. That reminded me how much the tool shapes us, as much as we shape the tool.

Six ways AI acts as a leader's Chief of Staff

Below are six practical applications that any leader (or anyone actually), regardless of function or industry, can adopt. These reflect what I see daily: smart leaders using AI not to work more, but to think better.

1. Preparing strategic discussions with clarity

Before a high-stakes meeting, AI can analyze context, summarize key points, and propose strategic questions. Instead of entering discussions with fragmented information, leaders enter with structure. Furthermore, AI highlights risks and interdependencies that are not always intuitive, which can help reduce blind spots and elevates the quality of the conversation.

2. Filtering and synthesizing information

Reports, long emails, slide decks, and market updates often consume hours of reading time. AI condenses them into key insights, implications, and proposed actions. In addition, leaders can request summaries adapted to different audiences: a board-level brief, a one-page summary, or a list of strategic risks.

3. Structuring communication for impact

Leadership communication requires clarity and judgment, whether writing a sensitive update, a performance message, or a complex alignment note, AI can help refine tone, simplify language, and strengthen narrative flow. In high-stakes situations, the difference between a good message and a great one can shape alignment and trust, AI can support leaders to reach that level consistently.

4. Stress-testing decisions

Before committing a direction, leaders can use AI to challenge their assumptions, simulate scenarios, and explore alternative perspectives. Of course this does not replace judgment, but it can enhance it. AI serves then as an intellectual mirror, revealing angles we may ignore when working under pressure.

5. Managing priorities and execution

AI helps leaders design their weekly focus, outline next steps after meetings, differentiate between urgent and important tasks, and identify opportunities to delegate. In addition, it helps reduce context switching, which is one of the silent killers of strategic thinking.

6. Strengthening the personal operating system

Leadership effectiveness does not depend only on business output. It also depends on personal systems: travel planning, health routines, reading habits, and small daily frictions. A lot of elements that AI can help simplify, allowing leaders to channel their energy where it matters most.

How AI supports my growth as a Talent Acquisition Leader

In addition to these broader leadership applications, AI now plays a meaningful role in how I operate and develop as a TA leader.

Better strategic preparation

AI helps me gather context on business units, refine questions before leadership discussions, and sharpen my point of view. This improves the quality of partnership I bring to senior stakeholders.



Stronger hiring strategies

For executive roles, AI helps outline role expectations, shape sourcing narratives, and structure assessment criteria. These are not small details; they influence hiring quality.

More consistent stakeholder management

Working with global leaders across regions requires coherence. AI summarizes past interactions, highlights areas of alignment or tension, and strengthens how I prepare for conversations.

Leadership behavior development

I use AI to rehearse difficult conversations, practice challenging diplomatically, and explore how to deliver feedback to senior leaders. For someone growing into broader leadership responsibilities, this is invaluable.

Enhanced experience for candidates and leaders

AI helps map potential friction points in the hiring journey and propose simple, practical adjustments that elevate the experience. Strong TA leadership is about building systems, not just pipelines and see beyond the open roles to approach organizational growth with the big picture in mind. In all these areas, the impact is clear: AI does not replace our expertise but acts as a multiplier.

AI is a capability, not a shortcut.

Across all industries and leadership forums, AI is discussed as a question mark. But in practice, it is a capability. Leaders who learn to use it early will operate with more clarity, more perspective, and more strategic intent.

In a word, smart leaders will get smarter! Not because AI thinks for them, but because AI helps them think better. Therefore, our opinion is that the risk is not adopting AI too early but adopting it too late and embracing it now will build a generational advantage.

Five high-value behaviors leaders can adopt starting tomorrow

Below are five practical habits that elevate leadership impact immediately. They apply to senior leaders and work equally well for professionals in any other functions:

1. Use AI to prepare for your next important meeting, share context, and ask for risks, strategic questions, and decision points.
2. Turn long documents into one-page strategic summaries, focus your time on interpretation, not extraction.
3. Refine every high-stakes communication with AI, the clarity of your message shapes the quality of alignment.
4. Challenge your assumptions before making a decision and ask AI what you may be missing. Good leaders pressure-test their thinking.
5. Build a personal operating system with AI
6. Use it for planning, learning, health routines, and daily friction points, small optimizations compound and elevate performance.

Closing reflection

The leaders who treat AI as a modern Chief of Staff will work faster, think with more clarity, decide with more confidence, and operate with more strategic depth.

In a world defined by complexity, since the future will not belong to the leaders who know the most, but to the leaders who see the clearest, AI can be a new source of leadership advantage.

About the Author

Léonard Collon is the global Executive Recruiter of ABB Motion, where he supports business leaders worldwide in hiring senior executives who drive performance and growth. He previously worked with global companies such as Google, Swisscom and Michael Page, and brings deep expertise in strategic leadership hiring. Léonard also leads the Leadership and People Council of the SwissMBA Association, where he contributes to strengthening the community's focus on leadership excellence, AI & HR and career development matters.

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