THE PREDICTIVE INDEX

# The Copy-Paste Problem

## How to Fix Generic AI Leadership With Behavioral Intelligence



# Leadership that looks personal. But fits no one.

An employee who pushes back in a meeting gets read as difficult. An employee who stays quiet gets read as disengaged.

Leaders already give AI this context when they turn to it for decisions about people. They describe an employee's attitude, work style or intentions before asking for advice, and that description usually comes from their impression, not validated data.

AI takes the leader's impression at face value and returns guidance built on a reading of the person that was wrong from the start. Leadership becomes generic.

It happens when they’re deciding who to hire, how to onboard someone, what to say in a 1:1, and who gets promoted. AI provides guidance for each one the same way, pulling from the same models and frameworks, regardless of who the decision is actually about. The leader takes that guidance and applies it, often without stopping to check whether it actually fits the person it's meant for.

**The copy-paste problem doesn't have to be where this goes. Leaders can use AI fully and still lead people like people.**

THE COPY PASTE PROBLEM: DEFINITION

Leadership guidance that looks personalized but was built to fit anyone, so it ends up fitting no one.



# The stakes are human.

**22%**

MANAGER ENGAGEMENT

**$10T**

LOST PRODUCTIVITY / YEAR

A decision built on a wrong read of a person becomes weak management support, whether a leader intends it or not, and weak management support already accounts for 63% of preventable employee exits in 2024. Leaders who watch that pattern play out on their own teams, without the tools to change what's driving it, often experience it as a failure of their own leadership.

Manager engagement has dropped to 22% in 2025, the steepest single-year decline Gallup has recorded, and disengagement across the workforce now costs the global economy $10 trillion in lost productivity a year.



# CEOs trust a system that isn’t working for anyone

WHO USES UNAPPROVED AI TOOLS?




Source: Cybernews survey. Bars use a common 0–100% scale.

Leaders are being asked to navigate harder people decisions with less time and support than ever, and many are already reaching for AI to make up the difference. That reliance is highest at the top of the organization. A Cybernews survey found that 93% of executives and senior leaders use unapproved AI tools, compared to 59% of employees overall.

Leaders aren't reaching for AI because they don't care how a decision lands for the person it affects. The vast majority (92%) of leaders, surveyed by PI, say feedback has to fit how a specific employee receives it. Hitting that standard takes real information about the person, and AI is what's available when a leader doesn't have it.

Three-quarters (74%) of CEOs in the same PI survey report full confidence in their managers' ability to handle a difficult conversation with a specific employee. Managers, asked separately, describe something closer to guessing. They're unsure how to open the conversation, unable to predict how the employee will react and struggle to adjust once it shifts in a direction they didn't expect.

CEOs believe their managers are equipped to navigate these high-stakes moments alone. Managers' own accounts say otherwise, as does their widespread, unmonitored use of AI to feed generic guidance into employee conversations.

# Leaders cannot replace human coaching with generic AI

Regardless of how sharp the prompt or question is, AI tools still have nothing to go on beyond whatever impression was typed in. Generic AI has a ceiling, and no amount of clever phrasing changes it.

Every leader hits that ceiling when they use AI to make people decisions, and each time, the decision comes out slightly wrong for the person it's about. Here are just a few common examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| **FEEDBACK** | A piece of feedback lands as tone-deaf, and the employee stops bringing up problems early, since raising them clearly hasn't led to being understood. |
| **THE 1:1** | A 1:1 misses what's actually going on with someone, so the conversation covers the wrong topic entirely, and the actual issue goes unaddressed for another cycle. |
| **PROMOTION** | A promotion call overlooks a skill the employee spent the past year building, because the AI generated criteria from a generic template instead of what this person actually contributed. |

These moments, repeated across a team, are how a tool problem contributes to rising disengagement, avoidable turnover and billions in lost productivity at the organizational level.

Some leaders try to give the AI more to work with by typing an employee's personal details straight into the tool. The impression they type is still just an impression, though, so the AI still has nothing behaviorally specific to work with. Using AI less isn't the solution. A leader who steps back from it still has to make the exact same high-stakes decision, just with no support.

# How to actually solve the data problem

Behavioral intelligence changes what the AI knows going in. Built into the tools leaders already use, it swaps an unverified impression for data that's already been tested against how the employee communicates, what motivates them and how they behave under pressure. Prompting is a skill a leader can practice. The data behind it is a problem no amount of prompt skill can solve alone.

**LEADERS**

**Leaders get an accurate, tested read on the person in front of them instead of relying on a gut guess.**

A leader working from validated data at hiring keeps that same foundation through every people decision that follows, from promotion calls to succession planning.

**MANAGERS**

**Managers walk into everyday interactions already understanding how an employee communicates and what they respond to.**

A manager who knows how someone takes feedback, what motivates them and how they handle pressure brings that understanding into coaching, delegation and recognition.

**EMPLOYEES**

**Employees get career-defining decisions built on who they actually are.**

A promotion, a piece of feedback or a development plan reflects an employee's actual work and potential, not whichever version of them a leader happened to notice.

# AI can make a leader sharper.

Behavioral intelligence doesn't make the decision for anyone. A leader who knows how someone communicates, what motivates them and how they respond under pressure is still the one deciding what to say and when to say it. The technology fills in what a leader's impression was missing.

AI can make a leader sharper. It can't make the decision human for them. That's still the leader's job, and no tool changes that.

The judgment stays exactly where it always belonged, with the leader.


# Stop guessing about the people you lead.



**See how PI helps organizations replace impressions with validated behavioral data.**