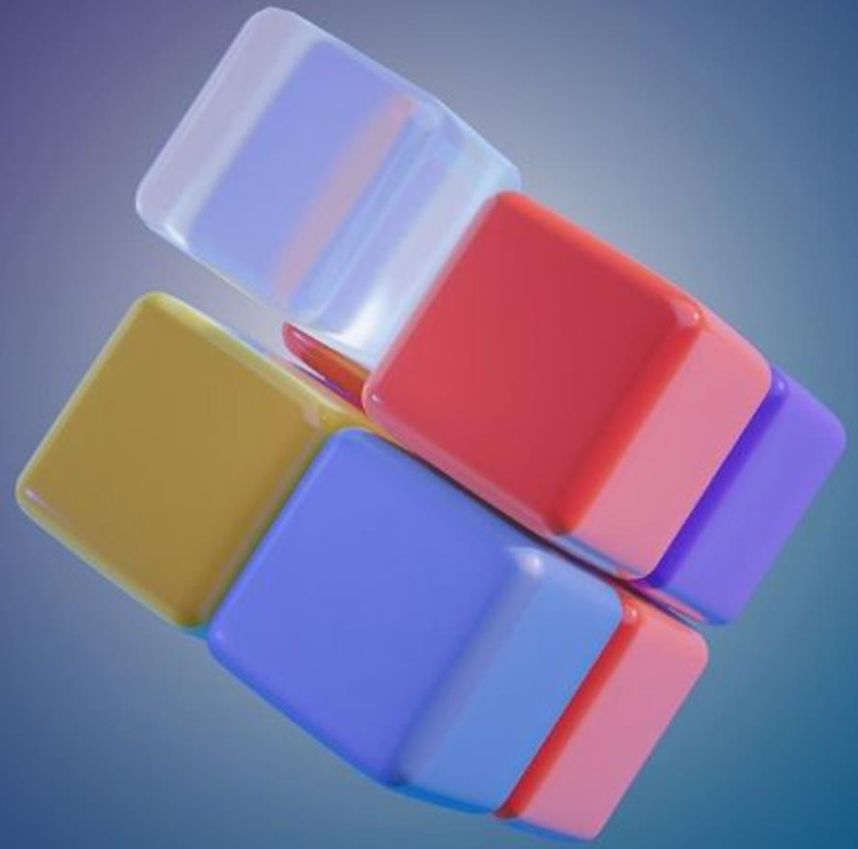
UHR Conference 2025

Online 13 - 15 May



#UHR25
#UHRawards25
#workwithUHR

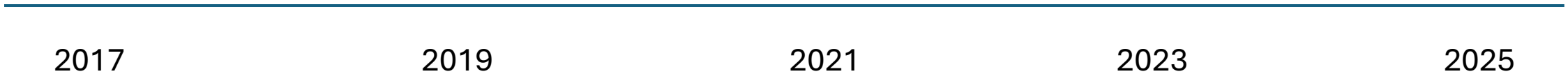
Chatbot to Copilot: the AI journey so far at UoN

Dr Vincent Bryce FCIPD

My perspective

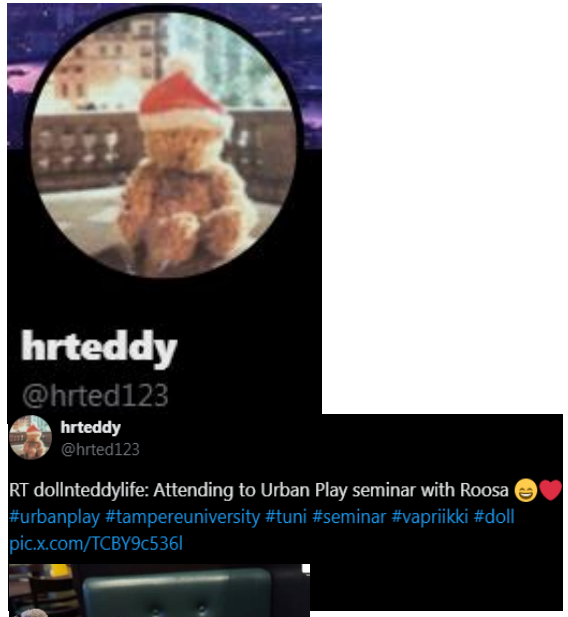
- 20 years in HR, systems, and continuous improvement background
- Royal Navy, JPMorganChase, local authorities, housing, Higher Education
- Qualified project/programme manager and coach
- PhD from UoN Horizon CDT – information systems
- Research interests – Responsible innovation in HRIS, Business case for responsible innovation, Future of work

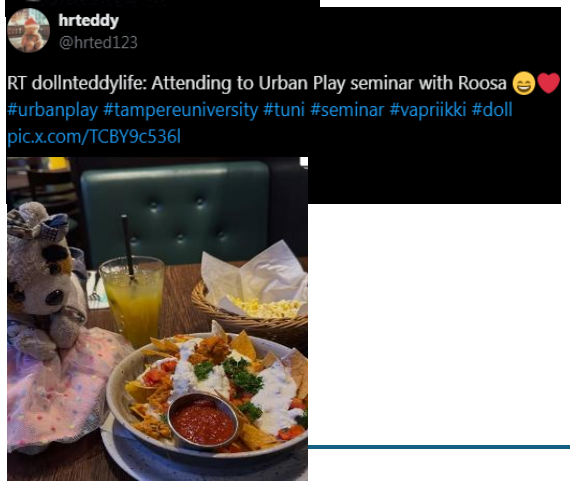
Timeline



Timeline

HR Ted

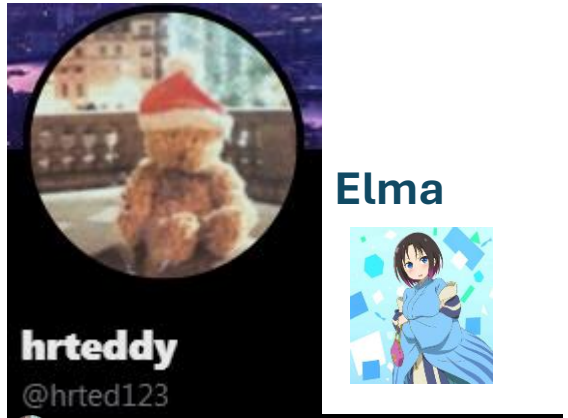




2017 2019 2021 2023 2025

Timeline

HR Ted



Elma

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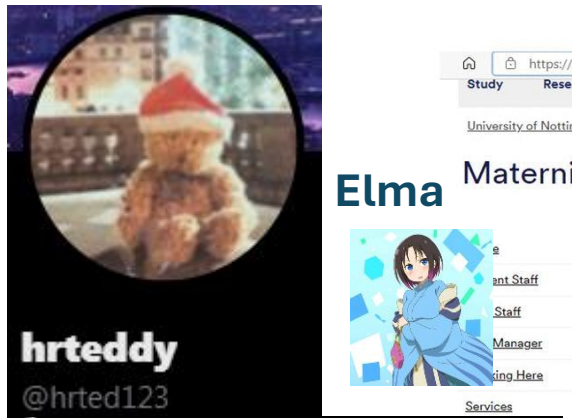
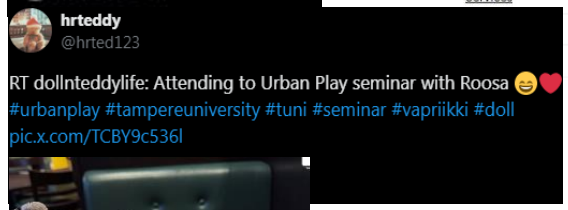
Timeline

HR Ted





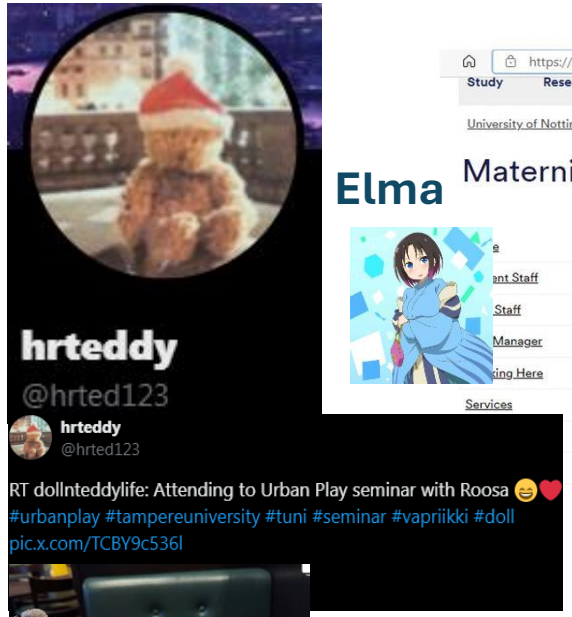
Vira

Elma

2017 2019 2021 2023 2025

Timeline

HR Ted



Vira

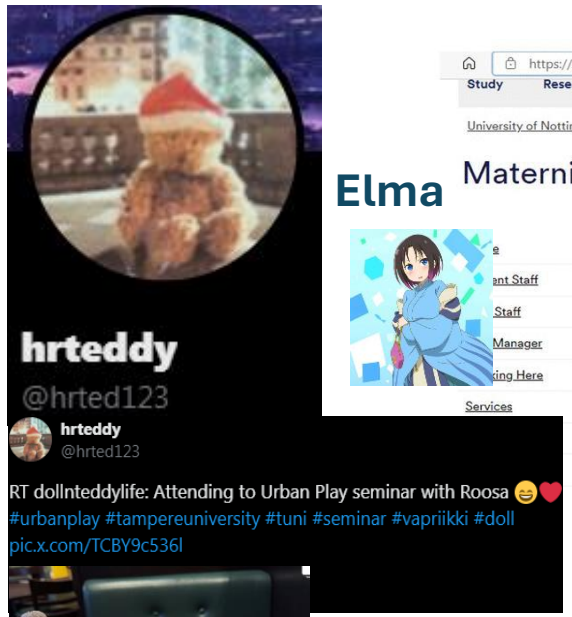
Elma

HR Data Strategy v1

2017 2019 2021 2023 2025

Timeline

HR Ted



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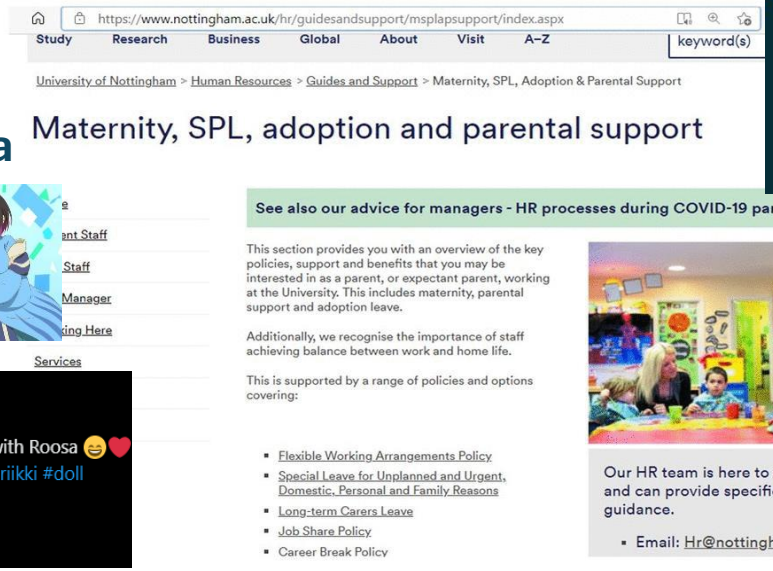

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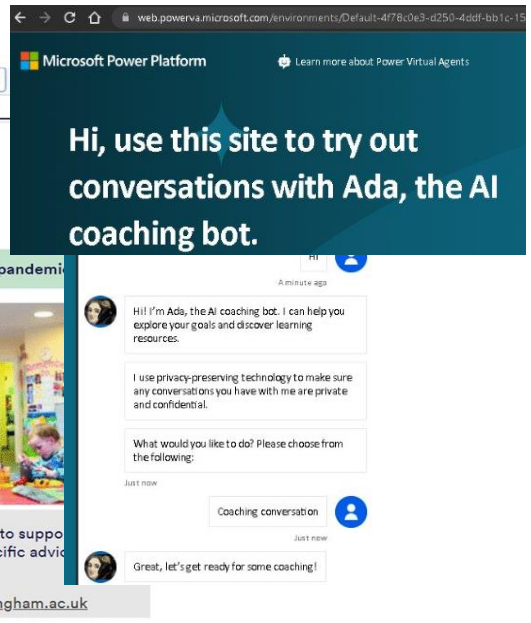

HR Data Strategy v1

HR Data Strategy v2

2017 2019 2021 2023 2025

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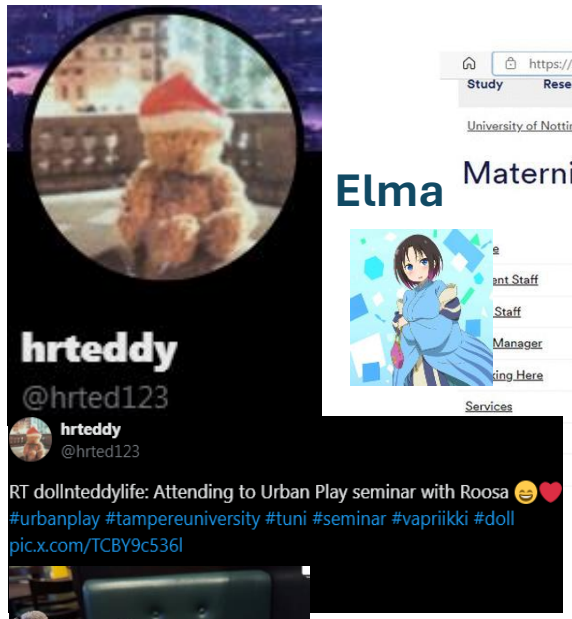

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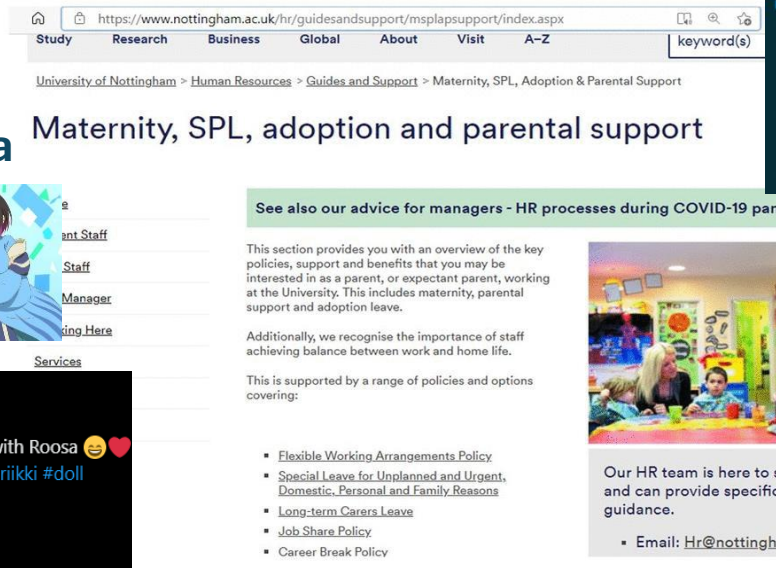

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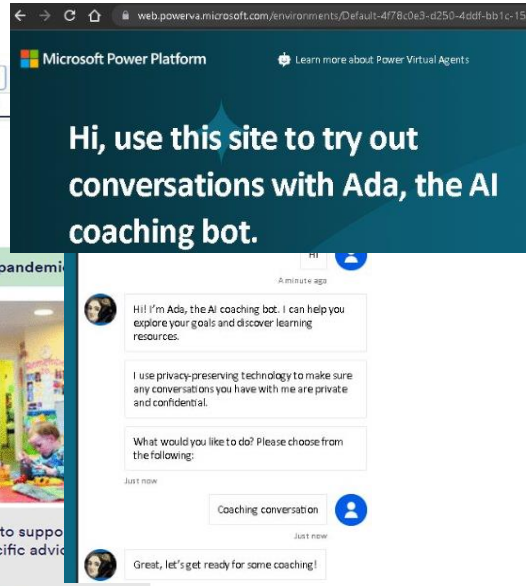

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HR Data Strategy v1

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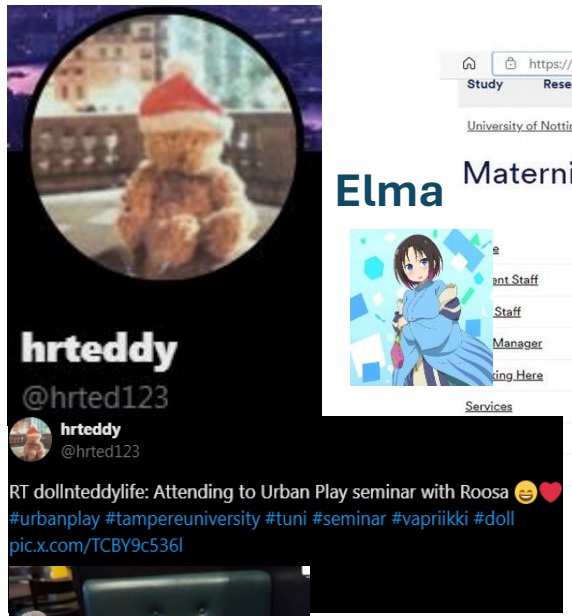

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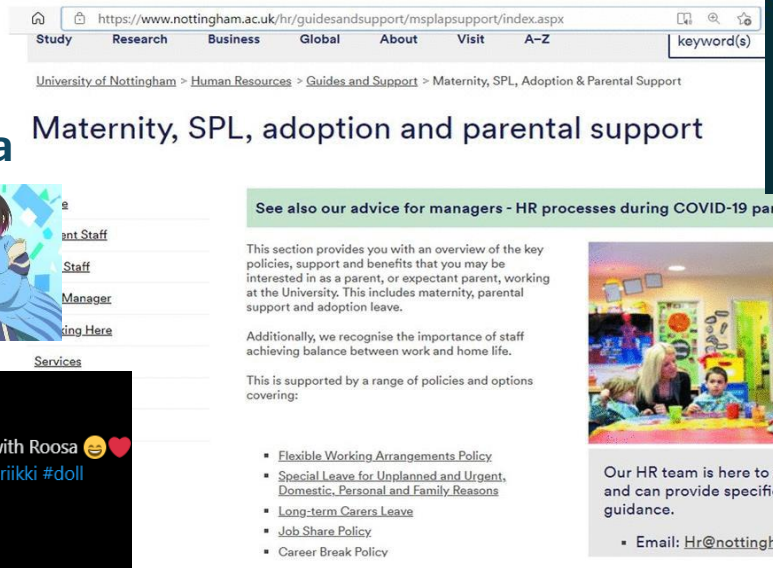

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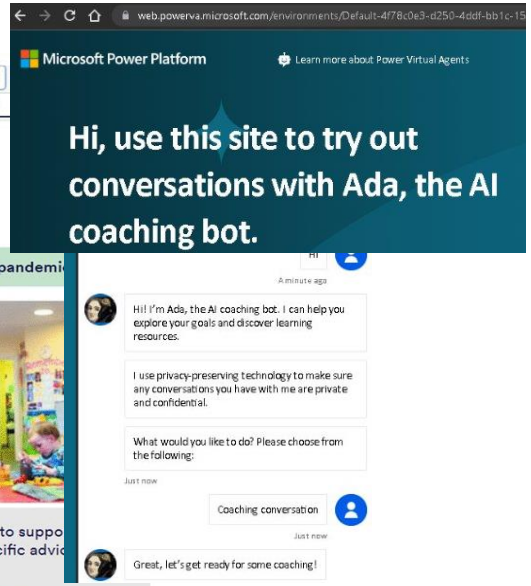

"I in AI" course

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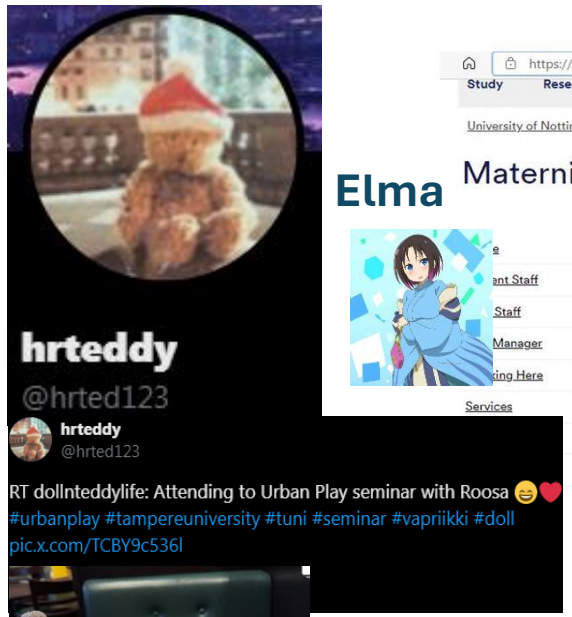

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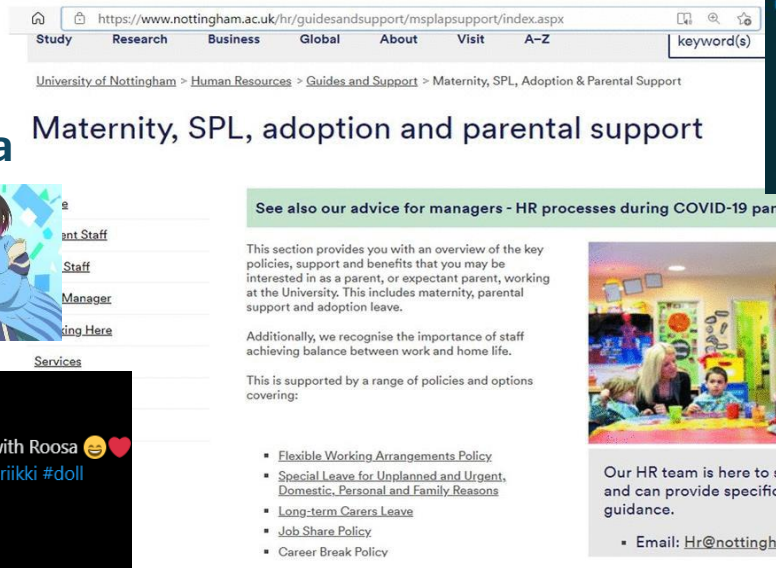

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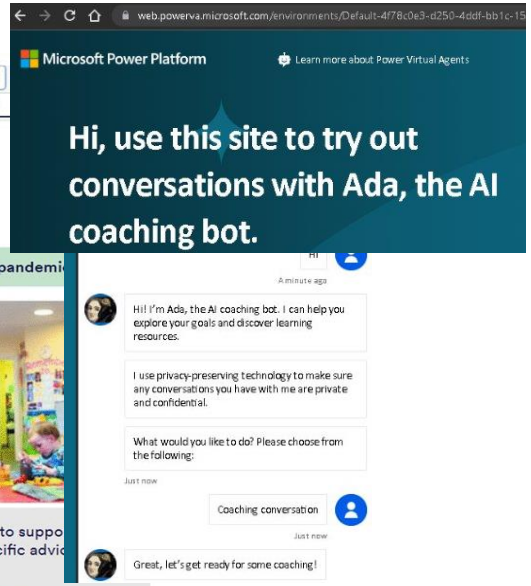

AI ambition statement

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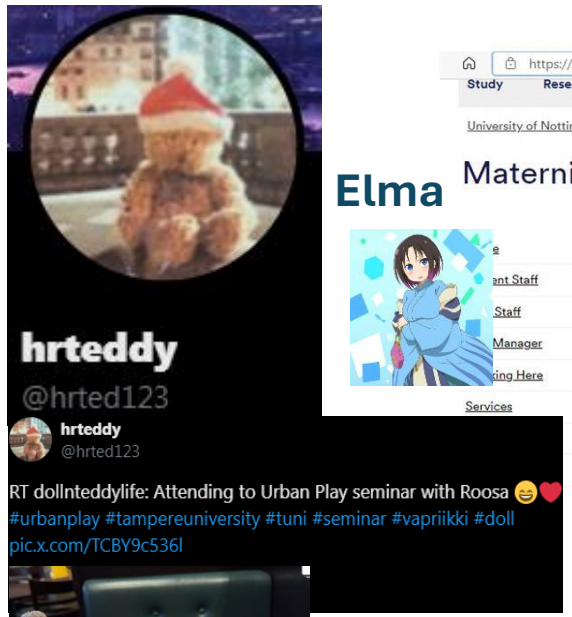

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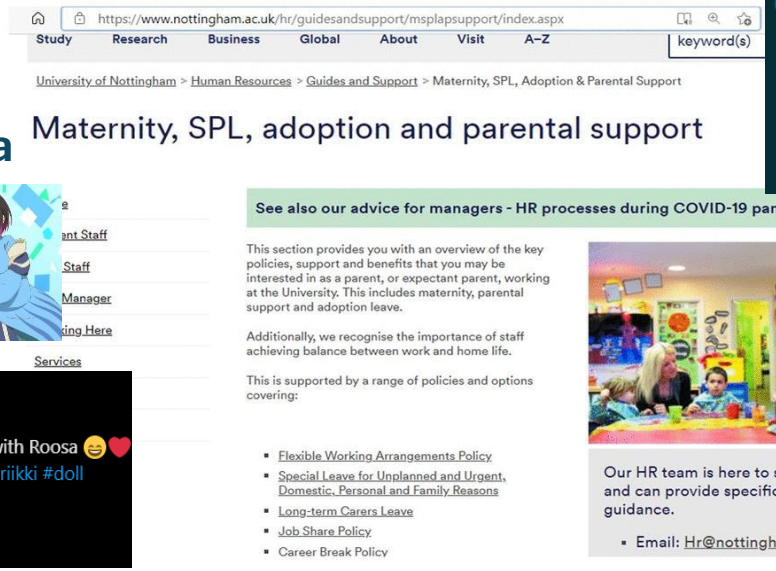

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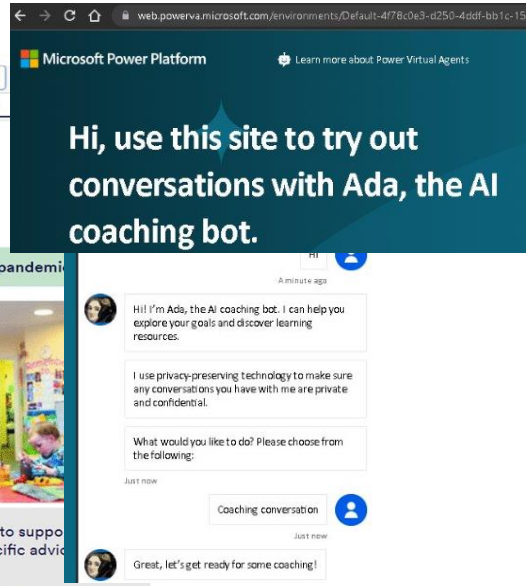

AI ambition statement

"I in AI" course

Microsoft 365 Copilot

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HR Data Strategy v1

HR Data Strategy v2

2017 2019 2021 2023 2025

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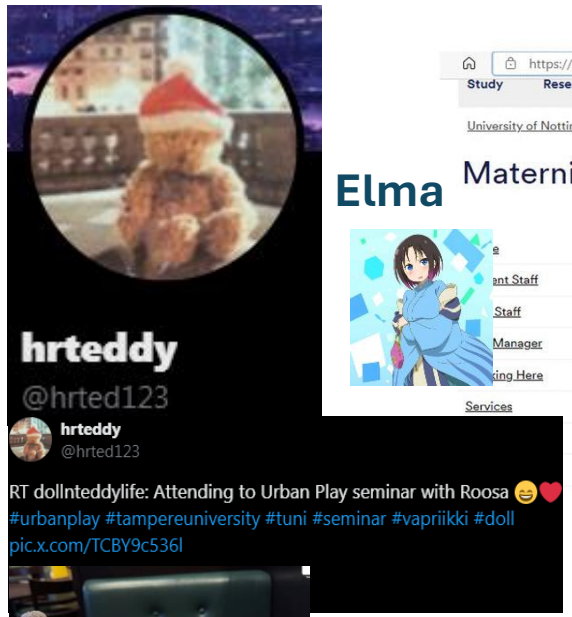

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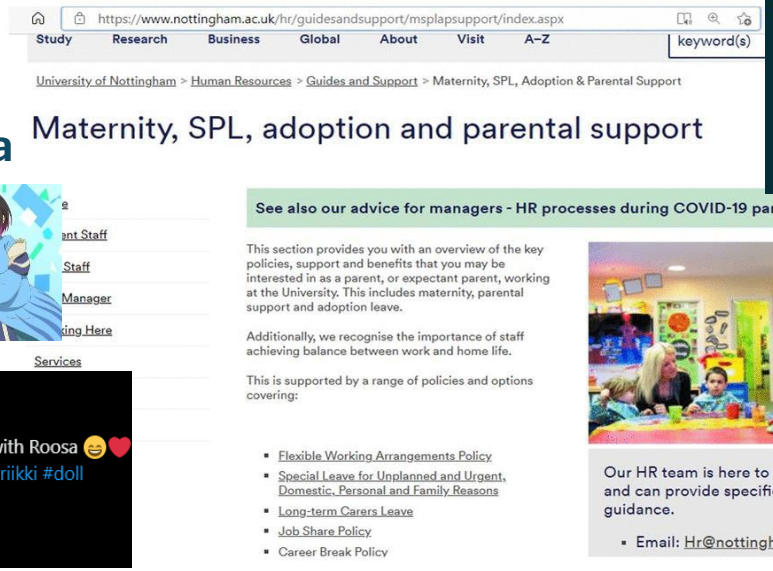

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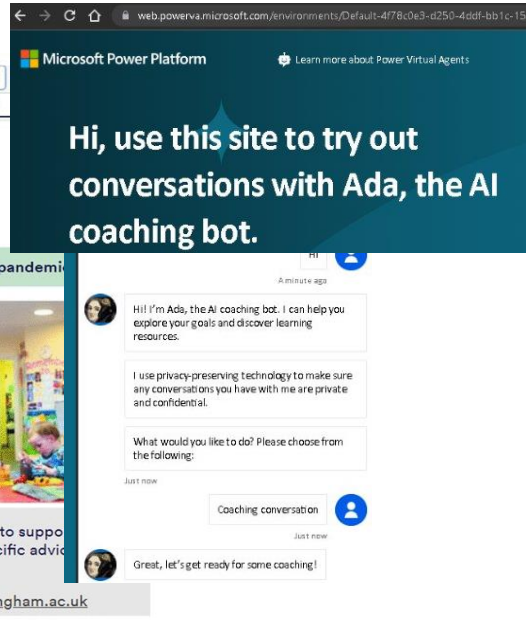

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HR Data Strategy v1

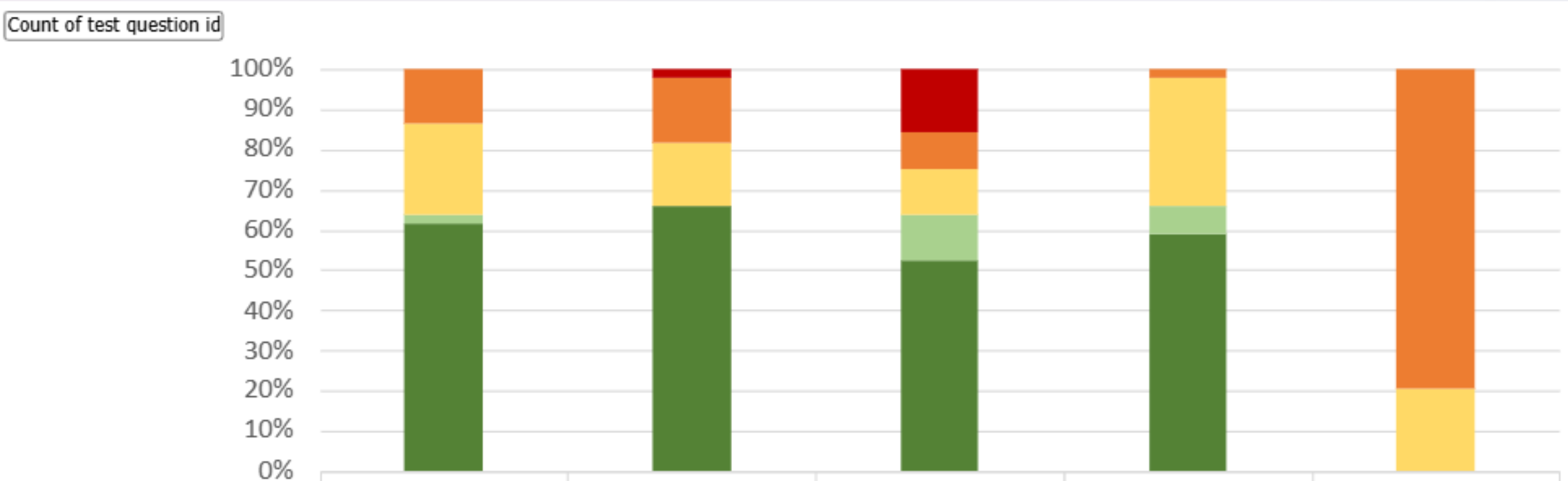
HR Data Strategy v2

HR Data Strategy v3

2017 2019 2021 2023 2025

Learning from Vira

- Easy to create, hard to get right
- Structuring documents for AI use
- Explainability – link to source
- Anonymise or personalise
- Selection of suitable topics
- Importance of knowledge management strategy
- Responsible development



	Custom QNA flow	Curated QNA KB	Default QNA KB	Google search	HR website
epic fail		1	7		
failure	6	7	4	1	35
Partial success	10	7	5	14	9
Success (2nd attempt)	1		5	3	
Success (1st attempt)	27	29	23	26	

Performance on queries

1. How many queries
2. What % of queries were successfully answered? (Azure portal or feedback survey)
3. Do unanswered queries indicate the need to adjust the Q&A in the bot's knowledge base, or a wider need for additional HR policy guidance? (i.e. is the bot not connecting to the right answer, or is it because HR guidance does not cover the question it cannot answer)

Improving the Knowledge base

1. Do we need to update the bot's knowledge due to policy or guidance changes? e.g. changes to policy or associated web pages. Option to use QNA 'Refresh content' feature.
2. Review Active Learning Suggestions and approve or reject
3. Review analytics & chat transcripts (Azure portal) – any other questions/categories we need to add or changes we want to make to existing knowledge base?

Bot mission statement – *What outcomes do we want the bot to achieve*

Example: To increase the number of basic HR family friendly queries that can be answered without referral to reduce pressure on front line HR teams.

Availability & cost

1. Check uptime/downtime & any failures (Azure portal)
2. Check budget against planned spend & usage patterns (Azure portal, agreed budget within HR)
3. Any issues to raise with IT(e.g. performance upgrades or budget adjustments. If not performing or being used, consider deactivation)

Wider feedback

1. Review wider feedback e.g. compliments, comments, complaints, survey
2. Any wider HR or companywide developments that have implications for the bot? *e.g. new initiatives we might want the bot to be able to answer about or new 'skills' we want it to have*
3. Do we need to put anything else in place to evaluate how the bot is doing

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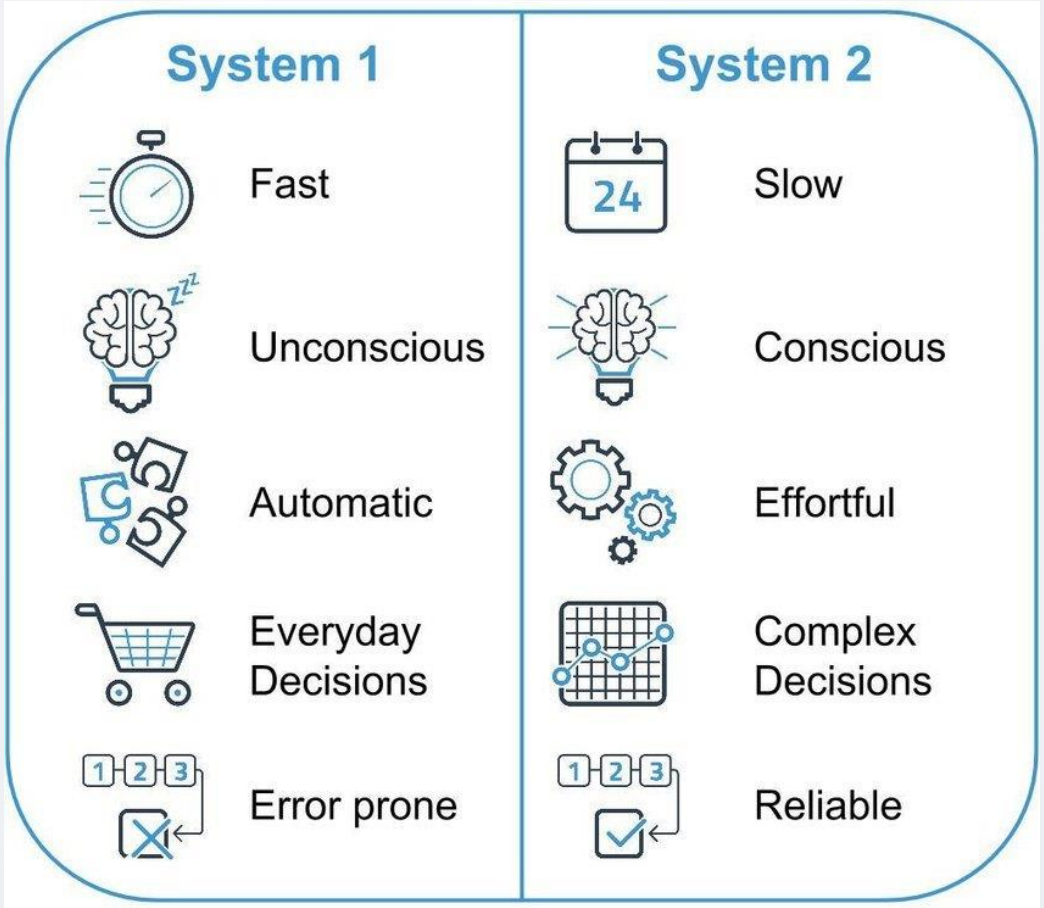
Digital Assistant

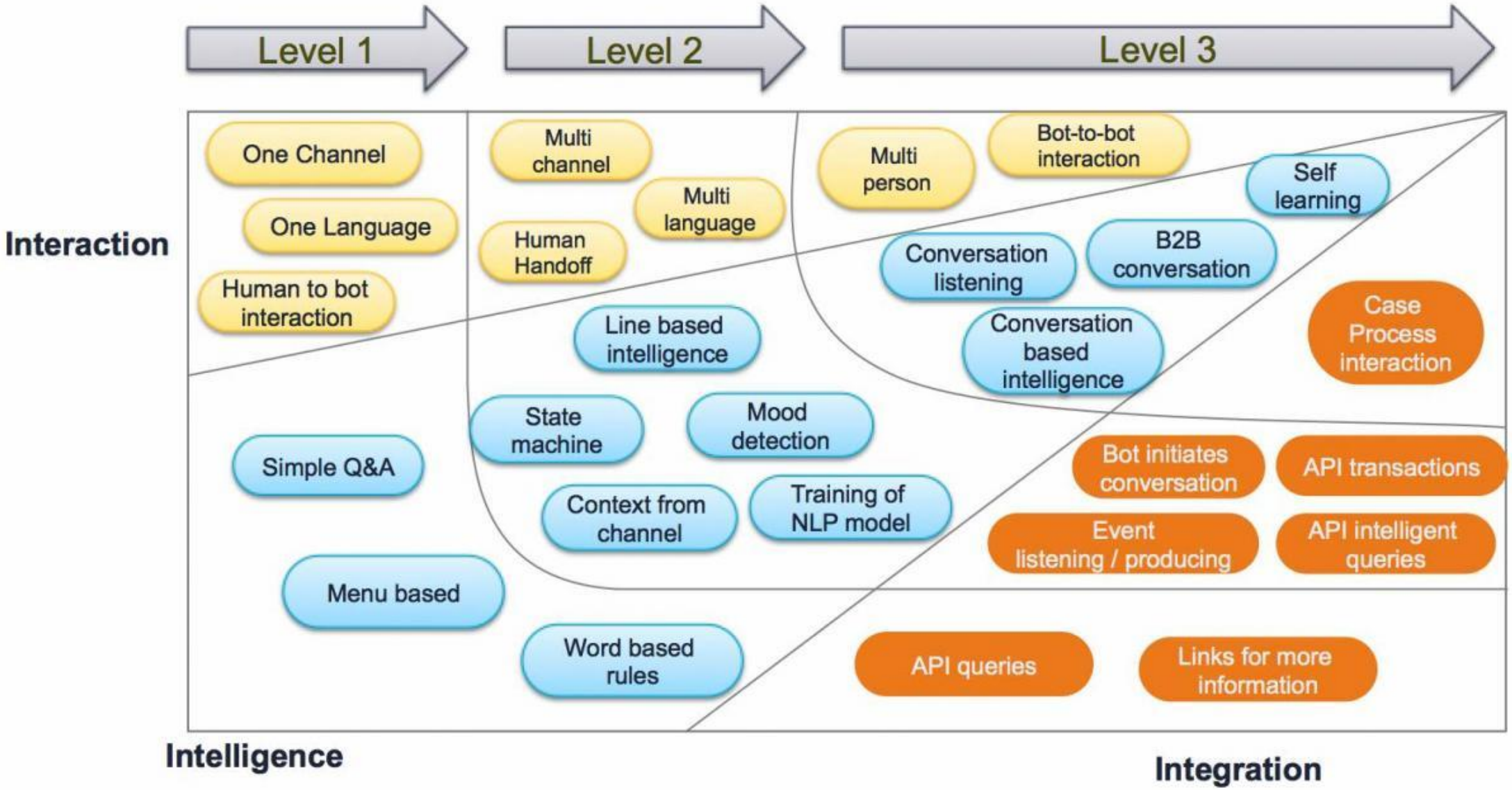
Microsoft 365 Copilot

Initial impressions from CoPilot[2]

Microsoft 365 Copilot

- Different flavours of CoPilot
- Product is still developing
- Potentially transformative
  - Managing high email volumes
  - Managing high meeting volume
  - Data tasks
  - Agents
- Reliance on organised SharePoint environment
- Importance of training & AI literacy
- Importance of creative thinking
- Naïve assistant metaphor
- Potential of Agents



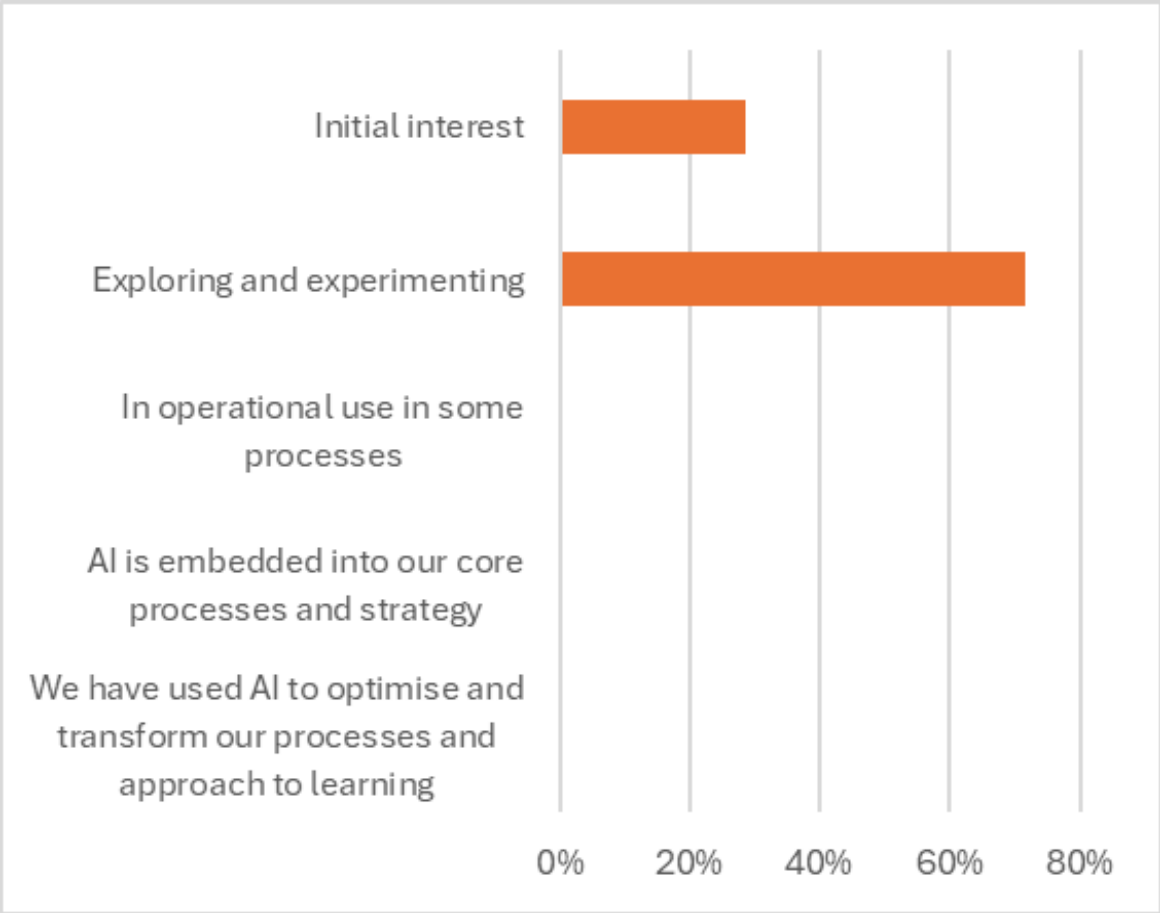


[CapGemini – Bot maturity model (2017)]

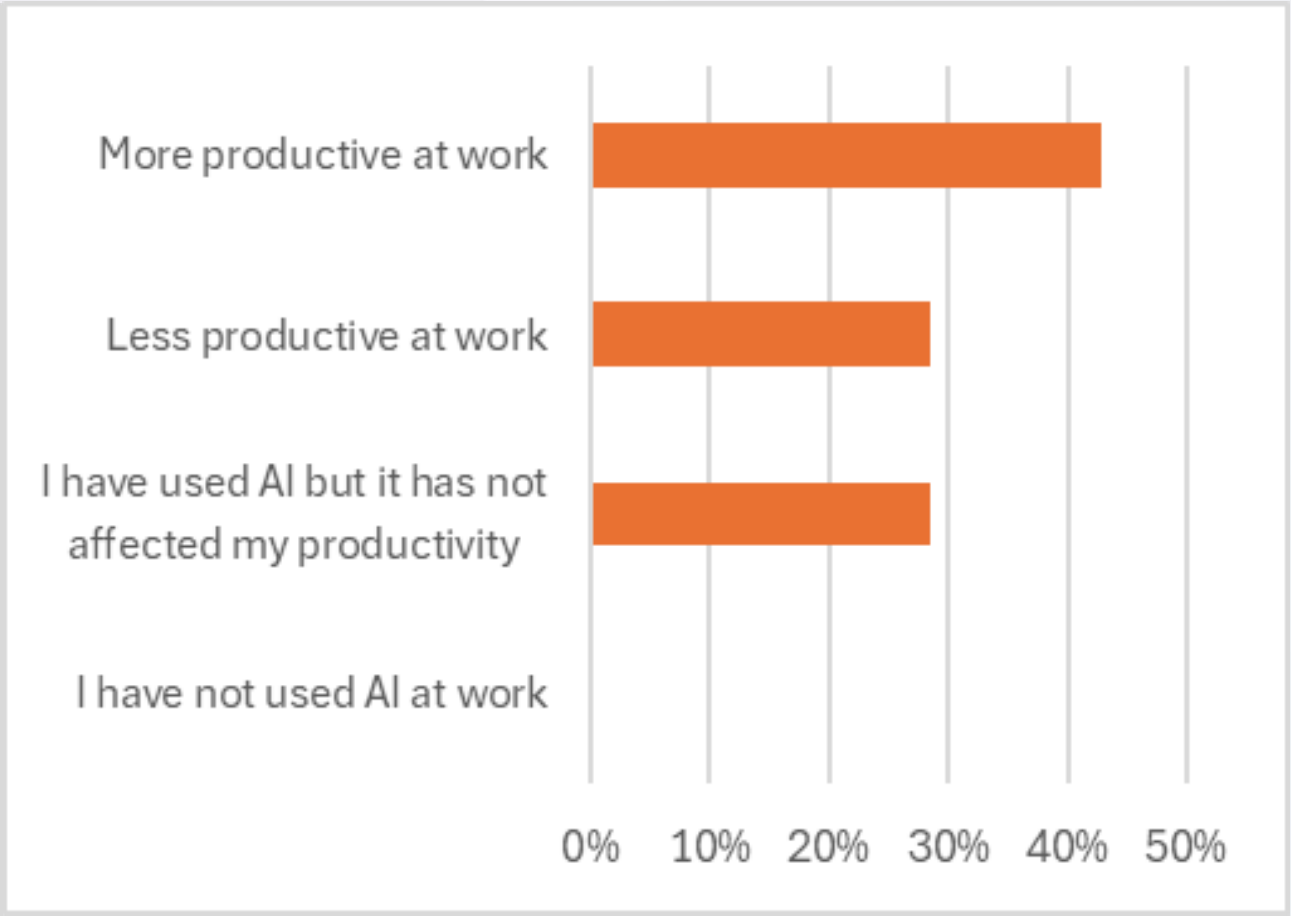
Pilot study – HE HR AI adoption

- HR department Business school collaboration, MSc student project
- Survey of HE HR practitioners June 2024, range of seniorities.
- 50% Russell Group, 43% post-92, 7% other.
- Small sample size

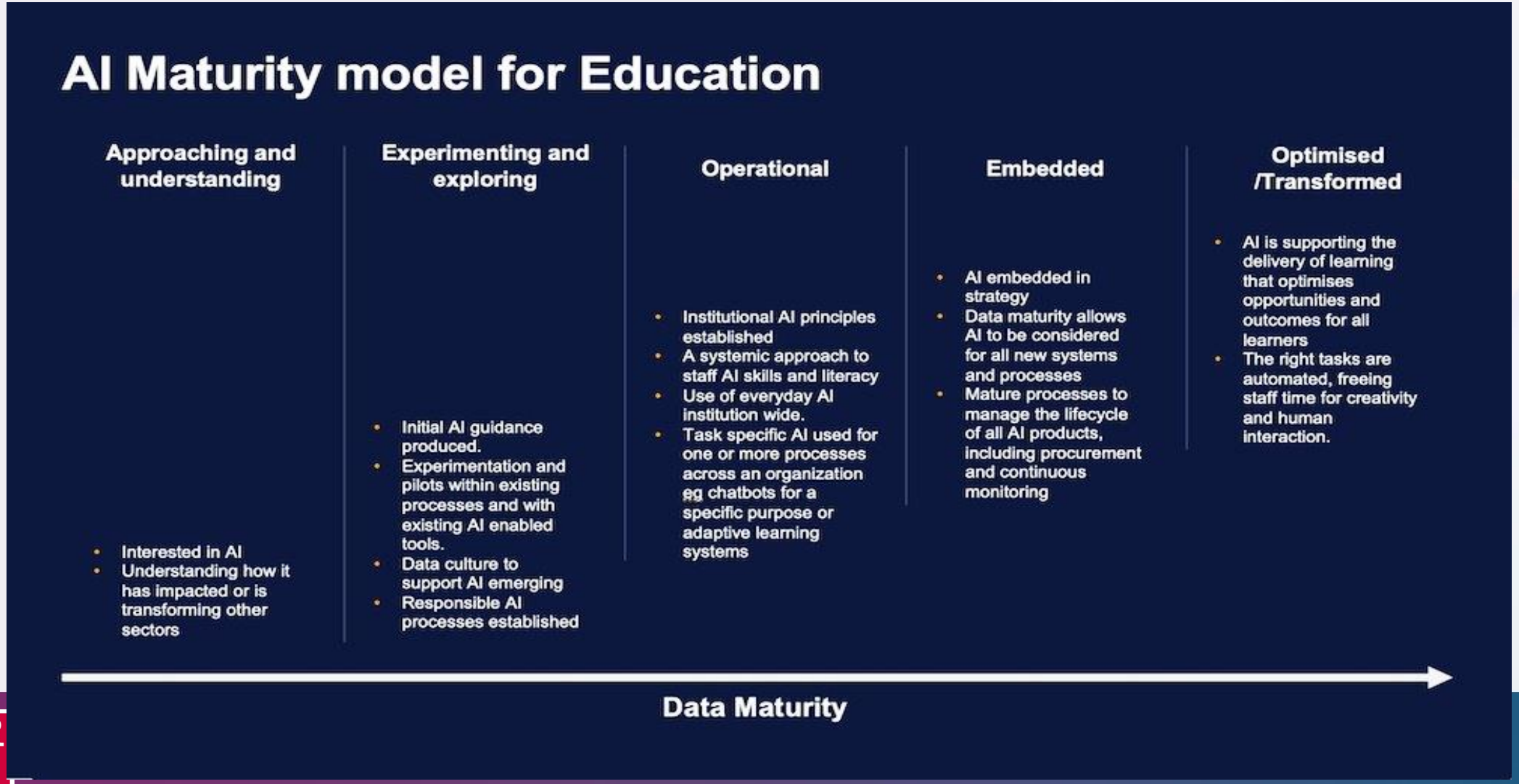
Which of the following best describes the current level of AI adoption within your HR department?



As a practitioner - has AI made you:



Going up through the gears



[AI maturity toolkit for tertiary education - Jisc]

UHR
Universities Human Resources

Low coding – the power is in our hands

Aware of low coding tools

Know where to access guidance

Access to low coding tools

Find suitable use cases

Know how to use low coding tools

Low coding – the power is in our hands

Aware of low coding tools

Know where to access guidance

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Using power tools safely

1. Be clear on what problem you are trying to solve with technology
2. Ensure the right people are involved in key aspects of decision-making
3. Consider how the technology will impact jobs and the way things are done
4. Consult with employees to identify unforeseen risks and gain buy-in
5. Prioritise usability and user experience in the design
6. Plan and monitor for equality, diversity and inclusion
7. Scrutinise products before procurement to understand how technical functions work and what ongoing management is available
8. Ensure data security and other compliance practices consider people principles
9. Communicate how technology is used to employees
10. Embed good people management practices to facilitate an open and responsible culture

CIPD: Using technology responsibly: Guidance for people professionals

Using power tools safely

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Safe experimentation:

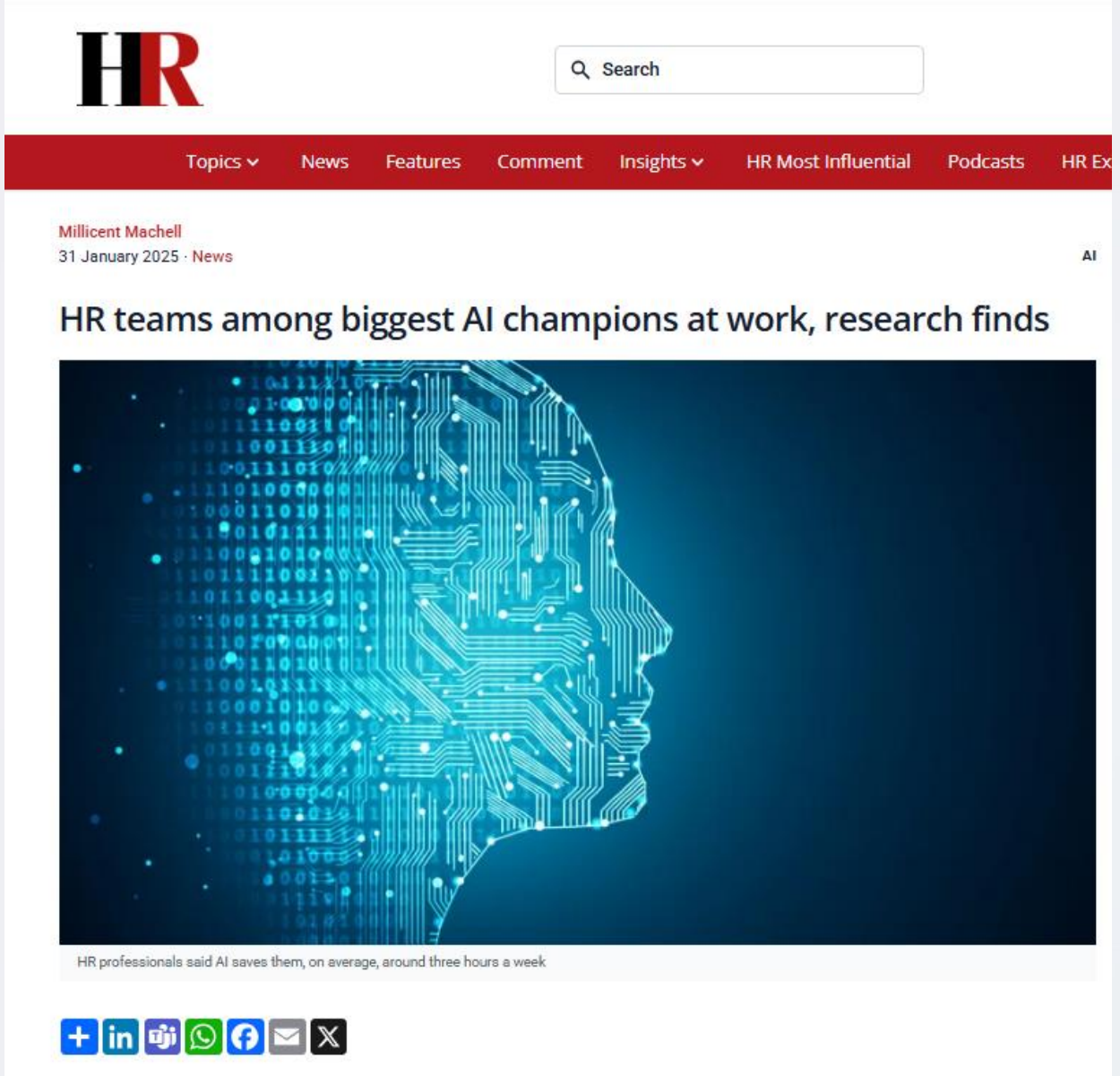
- Safe to fail experiments
- Engage early
- Clear decision points ('stage gates')
- 'Sandbox'
- Caution before use with sensitive or personal data
- Always check the output before use

CIPD: Using technology responsibly: Guidance for people professionals

Takeaways

- Be curious
- Have a go!
- Reevaluate your relationship with IT
- Develop with care

"How are we all engaging with AI...as departments?
And as practitioners?"



Thank you for listening!

- linkedin.com/in/vbryce
- cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/responsible-technology-use
- cipd.org/uk/topics/artificial-intelligence-workplace
- tuc.org.uk/artificial-intelligence-ai
- oii.ox.ac.uk/research/projects/research-programme-on-ai-work
- ifow.org

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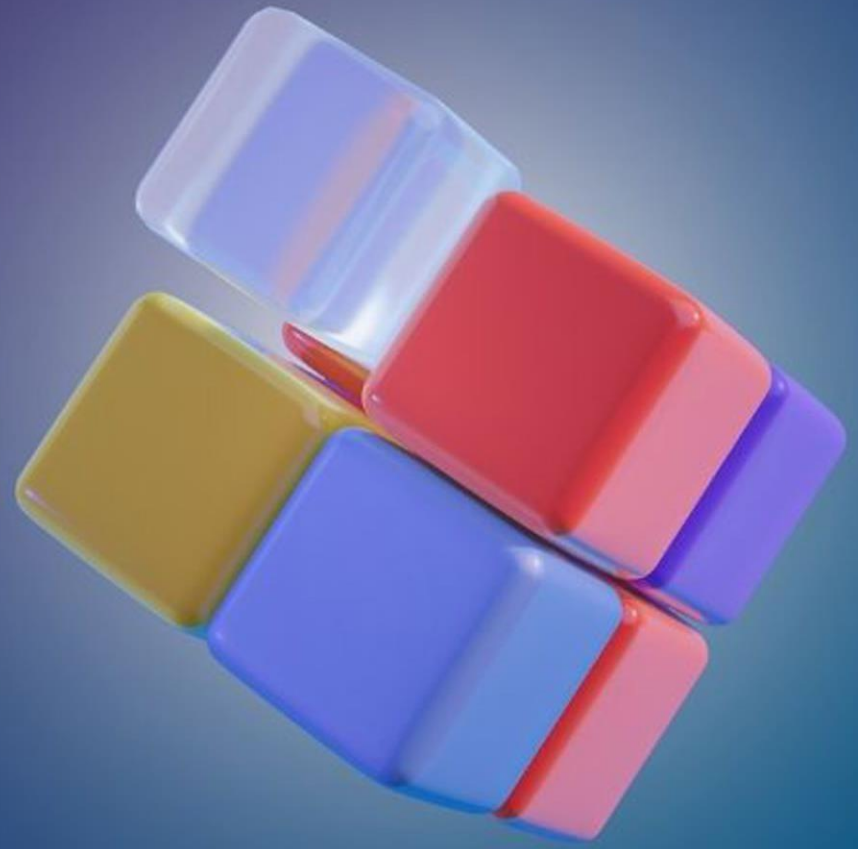

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