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By Scott Santens

AI is going to play a much bigger role in shaping our decisions, work, and daily lives, not because it becomes an all-knowing overlord, but because it steadily reduces how much human labor is needed to produce the same output while our institutions still treat wages as the primary way people access the economy. That mismatch is where disruption comes from.

People will embrace AI wherever it removes friction. It will automate busywork, speed up writing and analysis, improve service, and make individuals more capable. Businesses will adopt it because it saves time and money. Workers will adopt it because it helps them keep up. Competitive pressure will make adoption spread even in places that feel unready.

Resistance will rise too, because the benefits won't be shared evenly. AI will amplify the power of those who already have leverage, while threatening those whose livelihoods depend on tasks that can be replicated, automated, or made cheaper. Pushback will show up in labor action, regulation, institutional bans, and culture. People will defend "human-only" value because humans want dignity, trust, and connection.

The struggle, for many, will be ordinary and exhausting. It will look like churn, layoffs disguised as "restructuring," and more work that exists but pays less and offers fewer benefits. Even without outright replacement, the credible threat of replacement weakens bargaining power. Wages stagnate. Conditions deteriorate. The floor gets shakier for everyone below the top.

The ripple effects will be mixed. Some will be positive: new tools, cheaper services, and real breakthroughs. Some will be neutral: workflows changing and job titles shifting. Some will be negative: insecurity spreading, inequality widening, and life feeling more luck-driven. A society can tolerate rapid change when people believe the system is fair and the future is navigable. It becomes brittle when one bad month can ruin you.

Resilience can't be treated as a personal virtue. It's capacity plus support. Cognitively, we need stronger reality-testing because AI will flood the world with convincing content. Verifying claims, checking sources, and tracking uncertainty becomes basic self-defense. We also need systems thinking, because the temptation will be to blame individuals for structural outcomes.

Emotionally, we need distress tolerance for volatility and shame resistance for displacement. Many people will experience some version of "I did everything right and still got replaced." We also need identity flexibility, because tying human worth to job titles becomes a recipe for despair when work transforms.

Socially, resilience depends on relationships and belonging. People adapt through community: family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and mutual support networks that catch people before they hit zero. Ethically, resilience requires clarity about what is owed to people in a high-productivity society. If AI increases wealth while reducing the need for labor, clinging to the idea that income must always be earned through employment becomes outdated and dangerous.

The most practical resilience resource is an unconditional income floor. Not a maze of conditional programs. Not something you get only after proving you're desperate. A floor that exists before people fall. That single design choice turns job loss from a cliff into a transition. It reduces panic, preserves agency, and makes adaptation possible. People can search longer, train longer, relocate, care for family, or start something new without spiraling into crisis. It also stabilizes the economy by maintaining demand when shocks hit.

We should also share productivity gains as time. Shorter workweeks and work-sharing let societies absorb efficiency without turning it into mass displacement. Training has to be real, which means pairing education with the time and stability to use it.

New vulnerabilities will emerge. Dependence on AI can weaken judgment and erode core competencies. Manipulation will get easier as persuasion becomes personalized and scalable. Systems will become brittle if built on tools that can fail, change, or be withdrawn. The coping skills to teach are simple but essential: verification habits, disciplined use of AI as an assistant rather than an authority, redundancy in skills and support networks, and shared norms that reward transparency and punish deception.

The choice is not whether AI transforms society. It will. The choice is whether we build a resilient foundation so that transformation expands freedom instead of amplifying insecurity. If we let gains concentrate while people fall to zero, we will get backlash and instability. If we build the floor and share the dividend of productivity, we can turn nonhuman labor into human security and human agency.