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Seeing more, overseeing less? AI in competency management

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Introduction and research aim

AI now reads CVs, summarises feedback and matches people to projects. Research describes adoption models and their consequences for HR (Cayrat & Boxall, 2026), but less is known about the mechanism: how AI changes the information behind competency decisions, and when people formally "in the loop" actually check what it proposes.

Aim: to explain how AI changes what organisations know about competencies and when managers exercise oversight over decisions based on that knowledge.

RQ1 Visibility: which competencies, and whose, become visible to AI?

RQ2 Evidentiary authority: how do algorithmic outputs become grounds for action?

RQ3 Oversight: when do humans verify recommendations?

Why it matters for sustainable organisation management: responsible use of human capital requires transparent decisions and no systematic blind spots in whose competencies count.

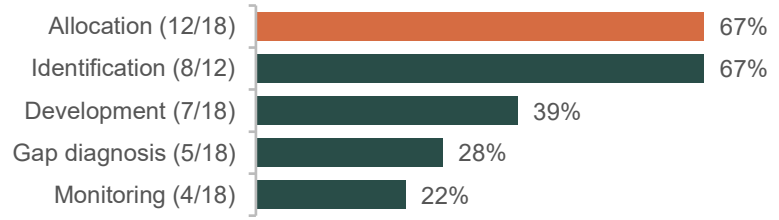
Research methods

Design. Exploratory multiple-case study; HR manager and team leader compared in each firm.

Cases. Three IT service firms in Poland that sell their people's competencies: a software agency (~130 staff + freelancers), a software house (~350) and the Polish arm of an international consulting group (1,000+ contracted consultants).

Data. Six in-depth interviews (Aug–Sep 2026), inventory of 14 AI applications; thematic analysis (57 codes, 409 quotations).

Where respondents report using AI: share of "applied" ratings

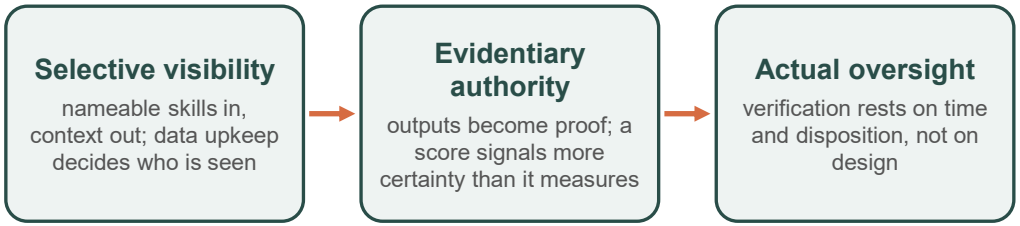


Base: ratings by six respondents of 2-3 example applications per process; not the share of firms. No respondent reported AI for succession or training-effect prediction.

Results and discussion

The same pattern held across six accounts, whatever the firm size or tool architecture. AI makes competencies **selectively visible**: nameable skills are captured, context and relationship history are not, and people with thin profiles may be overlooked. Its outputs gain **evidentiary authority** ("I had a hunch … and now I have proof"). **Oversight** stays dispositional: all six endorse "a tool, not a decision-maker", yet none knew of a procedure for recording overrides.

Proposed explanatory model



Proposed relationships, not a demonstrated causal sequence. Conditions: data quality; speed targets; tool architecture and governance. AI adds inference from free text and a confident score to what datafication already does.

A reported incident: the "100% match"

The matching engine rated a contracted consultant as a 100% match. The colleague handling the request did not check the Polish-language notes showing that the same client manager had already rejected him, and the consultant was proposed again. A verification procedure existed, but "time and the vision of a 100% match" meant it was skipped. The system did not decide: a person used its recommendation without checking, in a firm where accountability for AI had been formally assigned.

Conclusions

AI reshapes competency decisions less by replacing the decision-maker than by restructuring what is visible, what counts as evidence and when judgement is exercised.

Assigned accountability (who answers for the tool) **is not designed oversight** (who checks what, when and with what trace).

For sustainable management of human capital: keep decision trails, treat very high scores as a prompt to verify, budget the data work so that nobody becomes invisible, and inform contractors as well as employees.

Limitations: six self-reported interviews in one sector; no documents or employee voice.

References

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