

Staying human in the age of AI

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It is the ability to listen properly to what someone is asking, to sense what they are not saying, to respond in a way that makes them feel understood rather than processed. It is empathy, timing, judgement, tact. It is also taste: knowing what to leave out, when to simplify, when to insist on complexity, when to be firm, when to be kind. AI can help with drafts and options, but it cannot fully replace the lived intelligence that comes from being in the world, paying attention, and caring about consequences.

In Bangladesh, this matters because so much opportunity depends on relationships. Whether you are pitching a client, working in a team, running a small business, freelancing online, or building a startup, trust is the currency. Trust grows through consistency and human presence. It grows when you show up, reply thoughtfully, keep your word, and treat people as people. If AI encourages a culture of shortcuts where every message is a template and every interaction is optimised for speed, trust becomes harder to earn. You might respond faster, but you can sound less real.

SUMMARY

1. AI is a powerful helper, but delegating everything to it weakens judgement, originality, and responsibility.
2. Fluency is not truth, so over-reliance makes people more vulnerable to mistakes they can't spot.
3. The "human touch" is a competitive edge: empathy, taste, context, and trust cannot be automated.
4. Social skills are now a core survival skill, because real work and real life still run on relationships.
5. If we swap human connection for frictionless AI convenience, we risk turning ourselves into efficient, isolated machines.

The deeper danger is that over-delegation does not stop at work. It creeps into the personal. When people use AI to avoid awkward conversations, to manage emotions, to write apologies, to craft romantic messages, to mediate conflicts, they may feel relief in the moment. But avoidance has a price. Relationships are not built through perfect phrasing. They are built through vulnerability, patience, and the willingness to sit with discomfort. If you outsource the difficult parts of being with other people, you do not develop the skills that make intimacy possible.

That is why social skills are not a

soft extra in the age of AI. They are a survival skill. As machines get better at routine cognitive output, what remains valuable is what machines cannot do in the same way: build rapport, read a room, resolve conflict, motivate a team, mentor someone younger, earn a customer's loyalty, handle criticism without collapsing, and communicate under pressure. These skills have always mattered. Now they matter more, because they are harder to automate and because they protect us from turning ourselves into something machine-like.

The irony is that technology often makes social skills feel optional. When you can text instead of call, when you can order without speaking, when you can work remotely and never meet your colleagues, you can go through days with minimal human friction. AI takes this further by offering a substitute for interaction: an entity that always responds, never gets tired, and rarely pushes back. If we are not careful, we start to prefer that frictionless exchange to real relationships, which are messy and demanding. Over time, the preference becomes a habit, and the habit becomes a way of life.

This is how we risk mechanising ourselves. Not because machines become human, but because humans begin to adopt the machine's logic. We optimise everything. We minimise effort. We reduce conversation to transactions. We treat people as obstacles or opportunities, not as complex beings. We choose the easiest route rather than the most meaningful one. When enough individuals do this, society becomes colder. Loneliness rises. Trust falls. Even success feels strangely thin.

Staying human, then, is partly a matter of deliberate resistance. It means choosing, again and again, to practise what AI makes easy to avoid.

It means writing sometimes without assistance, so you can hear your own voice and strengthen your ability to think through language. It means doing mental work slowly enough to understand it, rather than producing answers quickly enough to move on. It means reading deeply rather than skimming summaries, because attention is a form of respect, and because complex problems cannot be solved with shallow understanding.

It also means making extra efforts to protect human-to-human connection in a world that quietly erodes it. Call a friend instead of sending a perfectly composed message. Sit with someone in person even when it is inconvenient. Ask questions you cannot outsource. Listen without planning your next



IMAGE: MICHAELLE DAOUST / UNSPLASH

reply. Join communities that are not about productivity: sports clubs, volunteer groups, study circles, cultural events, neighbourhood networks. These are not distractions from the future. They are part of what makes any future worth living in.

For young people especially, there is a temptation to treat social skills as secondary to technical skills. Learn the tools, build the portfolio, collect the certificates, and the rest will follow. But the person who thrives in an AI-shaped economy will often be the one who can combine competence with connection. The future belongs to people who can use machines

without becoming machine-like: who can collaborate across differences, communicate clearly, negotiate fairly, and keep a sense of purpose bigger than optimisation.

None of this requires rejecting AI. It requires putting it in its place. AI is best understood as an amplifier. Used wisely, it can amplify your learning, your productivity, your creativity. Used carelessly, it amplifies your laziness, your dependence, your isolation. The difference is not the tool. It is the human using it.

The point of staying human is not to prove you can do everything the hard way. It is to protect what only humans

can do well: meaning-making, moral judgement, genuine care, solidarity, courage. These are not romantic ideals. They are practical advantages in a volatile world. They help people adapt, recover, cooperate, and build institutions that last.

In the coming years, Bangladesh's young people will be told, repeatedly, that the future belongs to those who embrace AI. That is true, in a narrow sense. But the broader truth is that the future belongs to those who embrace people. The real challenge is not learning to prompt a machine. It is learning to remain fully human while you do.

Re-spawn: Bangladesh's esports at a crossroads

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development, recognising that the stars on stage represent only the visible fraction of an industrial base.

For Bangladesh, the economic logic is strengthened by demographic realities. A quarter of the population in the gaming intensive age bracket represents either a problem or an opportunity, depending on policy choices. Channelled into a regulated, professionalised industry, that cohort could generate export revenue, project a modern national image and develop transferable digital skills. Left to unstructured consumption, it risks the outcomes that originally

Bangladesh has officially recognised competitive electronic gaming as a sport. Now comes the harder task: building a framework that nurtures talent without importing the industry's worst excesses.

prompted judicial intervention.

A MOMENT OF CHOICE

The temptation for policymakers will be to declare victory upon formal recognition and move on. This would be a mistake. Recognition is a necessary condition for building a sustainable esports sector, but it is far from sufficient. The committee now drafting governance proposals will determine whether Bangladesh captures the industry's benefits or merely imports its pathologies.

The model should be cautious promotion accompanied by proportionate regulation, nurturing domestic talent and infrastructure while establishing safeguards against the genuine harms that competitive gaming can facilitate. This is harder than either blanket prohibition or laissez-faire permissiveness, requiring ongoing engagement with an industry that evolves faster than regulatory processes typically accommodate.

But the alternative, oscillating between bans that fail and recognition that achieves nothing, serves no one. Bangladesh's young gamers deserve better than to be alternately criminalised and ignored. And the country's policymakers, having belatedly acknowledged the reality of digital leisure, now bear responsibility for shaping its trajectory.

The game, as it were, is on.



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