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Tech Industries: AI, Equitable Opportunity, and the Future of Work

It had been the most exhausting year since Jim Reynolds founded Tech Industries, an enterprise software company specializing in workflow transformation, eight years prior in 2018.ⁱ Employing 300 people, Tech Industries was nearing the end of a year-long restructuring to integrate siloed functions across technical and implementation functions (see **Exhibit 1** for workforce composition relevant to the case). The restructuring itself had moved relatively quickly, but the organizational adjustments that followed had taken months to stabilize. Reynolds believed the company was finally beginning to operate as a more cohesive whole.

At the same time, two problems were emerging that Reynolds saw as fundamentally intertwined. First, the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) raised fundamental questions about what mix of talent, expertise, and organizational structure would position Tech Industries for continued growth and long-term sustainability.

The second concern was also preoccupying several members of his team, most notably Hannah Johns, chief people officer. Both Reynolds and Johns were aware that the evolving public discourse on diversity, equity, and inclusion was prompting new debates about fairness and opportunity. Johns was careful not to let this unduly shape her thinking. She knew from experience how quickly discourse surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion could shift in tenor and substance. Nevertheless, the landscape was increasingly relevant to questions among the leadership team about how AI could and should be integrated at Tech Industries. Johns was particularly attentive to how those decisions might affect implementation and other non-technical functions, which had become disproportionately female as the company grew.

ⁱ This case is fictional. Tech Industries and the individuals and organizations described in the case are fictional and were created for educational purposes. Any resemblance to actual companies, organizations, or individuals is coincidental. References to real technologies, events, and broader industry developments are included to provide context for the fictional scenario.

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