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Dear Reader,

As an anthropologist, a social scientist who studies humans, human behavior, societies, and cultural development across the past and present, **Paula Goldman** has come to AI with a take on it that is sharper than most. In our lead piece **Mindstream** poses Paula a set of ten questions that demystify AI for leaders across the board. Paula Goldman is Salesforce's Chief Ethical and Humane Use Officer and bestselling author of *Manage the Machine*, and has been in AI governance since before it was a job title. In this interview, she covers why accountability is broken, what good oversight actually looks like, and why she thinks AI might make us more connected to each other, not less.

"I've always been inspired by innovation, but when you pay equal attention to the people side of things, it opens up a clearer picture of how tech gets used and the choices that make it succeed or fail. That perspective has shaped my career trajectory," she says.

Next up is **Frank Furness** who poses the question Are we becoming better at using AI — or simply better at collecting AI tools? He says the objective isn't to use more AI.

The objective is to spend less time doing things machines can do so we have more time doing the things humans do brilliantly. Can't argue with that.

Bradford R. Glaser then writes about how to fight the forgetting curve after employee training. Memory loss after a session follows a pretty sharp downward slope. Without any reinforcement, that decline is relentless. As much as 70% of new information can fade within the first day alone, and close to 90% of it may be gone by the end of the week, which is just how human memory works on its own. For any manager or HR professional who spent weeks just to get that budget approved, it's a pretty painful result to have to sit with. Glaser offers the antidote in a fairly pain-free 30 minutes read,

Back-of-the-book *Top-of-Mind* shifts the focus from AI and allied concerns to global warming, and asserts that while the world panics about what might await runaway artificial general intelligence (AGI) around the corner, Nature has arrived, largely unannounced, with a sledgehammer that threatens death and destruction in the here and now. Human, and not artificial intelligence, needs to be the lead goose that can save the day for humanity. So, the advice on offer is to banish all thoughts of keeping up with the Joneses, and do much more with a whole lot less. Hallelujah. Stay safe and pray that better sense prevails 😊

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10 Questions for AI Leaders

Paula Goldman

Author, *Manage the Machine: How to Harness Human-AI Collaboration at Work*



Paula Goldman came to AI via anthropology, which probably explains why her take on it is sharper than most. Salesforce's Chief Ethical and Humane Use Officer and bestselling author of [Manage the Machine](#) has been in AI governance since before it was a job title.

In our interview, she covers why accountability is broken, what good oversight actually looks like, and why she thinks AI might make us more connected to each other, not less.

Paula Goldman | 14 min read

Mindstream: What's something you believed about AI two years ago that you no longer believe?

Paula Goldman: Less of a specific belief, but I initially underestimated the velocity and significance of AI improvement. Even though I spent a lot of time projecting forward to what work would be like with powerful AI agents, it was easy to over-anchor on some of the early shortcomings of AI (like an inability to solve basic math questions).

Many of those obvious gaps closed faster than I expected. There are still real limitations, but they can be less glaring.

On the one hand, that makes many applications more reliable. On the other hand, it makes mistakes harder to catch, because when answers are mostly right, we can stop watching for wrong ones.

If you had to explain your AI philosophy in a single sentence, what would it be?

AI is not an oracle, nor is it human

intelligence; getting the best from it means actively managing it in service of helping people do bigger and better things.

Most AI coverage swings between utopian and apocalyptic. Where does the reality actually land for you right now?

I wrote *Manage the Machine* for precisely this reason. Both extremes make it seem like AI is some inevitable force descending upon us, something over which we have no control. The reality is both more ordinary and also more hopeful. For all its power, AI still has flaws, and how it plays out depends on us...on the choices we make about how to use it.

Which human skill do you think is becoming more valuable in the AI era?

I was going to say judgment or relationship-building. But I will pick management. Now, or soon, most knowledge workers will essentially be managers of multiple AI agents, and thinking of ourselves as such is essential.

This means knowing what things to delegate to AI and which to keep for people, giving clear instructions with

the right amount of context, preserving critical thinking and expertise to be able to judge AI recommendations, and staying accountable for results.

We tend to do a bad job preparing leaders to manage people. Many new people managers are promoted because they were strong individual contributors, without training or instruction on the complexities of leading teams.

If most knowledge workers are about to become managers of AI, we shouldn't repeat that mistake. AI management should be taught and practiced like any other skill.

Are you worried we're in an AI bubble?

I can't prognosticate the market, nor is that my expertise. I do believe that we've barely begun to scratch the surface of what existing AI capability can do to improve business outcomes. And we can count on continued improvement in the raw capability of AI as well.

Markets will wax and wane, but I'm pretty confident that we are in the early stages of a very significant transformation in how work gets done.

You've been in the AI ethics and governance world since before the AI boom. How have those conversations changed as AI became widespread?

When I first took my role, I had few equivalent peers in the industry. In the last few years, I've seen companies (both tech and non-tech) create similar functions. I've also seen governments add staff with technical understanding of AI issues, and of course much more widespread public attention to the topic. However, it still feels like early days.

One of the things that makes AI governance challenging is that AI is everything, everywhere, all at once. In the old days, AI models were used for one specific thing, like predicting customer

churn. Now the same models can be used in nearly every domain of knowledge work.

That makes the past approach of reviewing each model for a single intended use much harder to apply. A model may be great for drafting marketing copy but require significant safeguards when employed to sift through mountains of evidence in legal discovery.

So governance increasingly has to happen at the point of use, and responsibility is shared between companies that build these systems and the organizations that use them.

What's one small decision you've made that had a large impact?

Perhaps not small, but: deciding to become an anthropologist. Not a choice initially received by my parents as a sure-fire path to success and stability. But it profoundly changed the way I think about technology and business strategy.

I've always been inspired by innovation, but when you pay equal attention to the people side of things, it opens up a clearer picture of how tech gets used and the choices that make it succeed or fail. That perspective has shaped my career trajectory, from Omidyar Network to Salesforce (my parents have since come around, too).

Your book is full of examples where the failure wasn't the AI - it was how humans designed or supervised it. What does good human oversight of AI actually look like in practice?

Some of it is just common sense. Take the question of accountability. You wouldn't hire a new employee and not give them someone to report to, or open a retail store and not put someone in charge of it. But when it comes to AI, we've been very unclear about how accountability should work.

The models I'm seeing evolve are matrixed ones: at the tool level, a named individual

who is responsible for its effectiveness (that might be someone in IT, or it might be, for example, someone in marketing for campaign-specific tools). And at the output level, individuals who use the tool are responsible for their own work.

Some of it is about defining in advance where you don't want AI to make judgment calls. In customer service for example, that might be circumstances that are sensitive, require legal judgment, touch a lot of money, or fall into grey areas of company policy.

And one of the most important parts is about how we preserve the ability for people managing AI to be able to exercise judgment and creative thinking. I vibecoded my book website, for example, and I got my settings wrong so that my agent asked me for permission every single time it accessed a website. Naturally, I started immediately clicking yes without thinking.

And that's what happens when AI is usually, but not always, right. We stop pausing before hitting approve. Part of the answer is inserting a little bit of what we call "mindful friction" into the tools. When it really matters, you want the person accountable to stop and think.

Another part is about creating spaces for people to think before they delegate to AI in the first place – for example, with innovation tasks, initial brainstorming and ideation is often helpful before asking AI to expand on ideas.

Which recent AI breakthrough made you rethink something fundamental?

I've been watching self-driving cars with a lot of fascination. In the last few years, the expansion and uptake have been breathtaking. At the same time, new edge cases keep emerging, like the time when San Francisco had a blackout and Waymos stalled at dark traffic signals.

I used to think that edge cases would make

self-driving cars significantly slower to market. But of course, with time, such edge cases turn into known patterns that AI can manage. What was once unusual becomes routine.

Does this mean that eventually all the edge cases will be figured out and AI will be able to handle all forms of human work, as some would have us believe? I still don't think so, for many reasons. I'll share two here.

One is that AI itself is accelerating the pace of change in the world, which keeps producing situations that no one has seen before, from new kinds of fraud to new ways of organizing work. As AI learns how to handle yesterday's edge cases, it's helping to create new ones. Another is that interpersonal interactions are a different kind of problem space than traffic, which runs on explicit rules (even if those rules sometimes get messy).

Finish this sentence: In five years, AI will make people feel _____. Why?

Connected to each other. Admittedly, this is far from inevitable. But some of my favorite AI use cases in the book were the ones that helped people be more present for each other.

The AI coach that helps a manager practice for the hard conversation that opens up someone's career trajectory, instead of avoiding the conversation all together. The AI agent that allows the salesperson to be fully present in a meeting instead of spending time on lead qualification or research. The employee knowledge agent that doesn't just answer questions but suggests connecting with teammates who can offer more insight.

There's a lot of well-deserved concern right now about AI increasing isolation at work. But it doesn't have to be this way. A lot of it comes down to how we design intentionally for connection.

Source:

<https://www.mindstream.news/?bhlid=d84e5906677252cb32f6d8eff1ca9ccb32c59326>

The Biggest AI Mistake



Are we becoming better at using AI — or simply better at collecting AI tools?

Frank Furness | 8 min read

I spend a lot of my time speaking and training around AI, sales and LinkedIn, and I've noticed something interesting.

People love discovering new tools.

ChatGPT. Gemini. Claude. Grok. DeepSeek. Perplexity. Clay. Apollo. HeyGen. Gamma. Beautiful.ai. ElevenLabs.

Another one launches and suddenly we're signing up for another free trial and trying to remember which email address we used.

At some point, you have to ask:

Is any of this helping us sell?

That's why I've changed the way I think about AI.

I'm becoming much less interested in individual tools and much more interested in the journey.

Start with the sales problem

Suppose I want to win a new client.

I could use **LinkedIn and Apollo** to identify the right people.

Then **Perplexity, Grok or Gemini** could help me understand the company, market and what is happening around them.

I could take that information into **ChatGPT, Claude or DeepSeek** and ask the AI to challenge my thinking, identify potential problems and prepare intelligent questions.

If I need more information about the prospect, **Clay** can enrich it.

Now I have something worth saying.

That's when the creative tools become useful.

I could turn the idea into a presentation with **Gamma or Beautiful.ai**, create

supporting graphics in **Canva**, produce a personalised video with **HeyGen**, or potentially use **ElevenLabs** where voice makes sense.

Suddenly we're not talking about AI tools anymore.

We're talking about a **sales system**.

And that's a much more interesting conversation.

But there's a catch

The more AI can do, the more important I think the human becomes.

AI can research somebody before I meet them.

It can't build the relationship for me.

AI can suggest five brilliant questions.

It can't look across the table and realise that question number three has just made the customer uncomfortable.

AI can draft a follow-up email in seconds.

It doesn't know whether I should pick up the phone instead.

AI can create a beautiful sales presentation.

It doesn't know when I should close the laptop and simply listen.

Those are human skills.

And they're becoming more valuable, not less.

Don't ask which AI is best

I'm also increasingly convinced that we're asking the wrong question.

People ask me whether ChatGPT is better than Gemini.

Or Claude.

Or Grok.

Or DeepSeek.

My answer?

For what?

Try giving the same genuine business problem to several of them.

Don't ask five AIs five different questions.

Give them exactly the same problem.

Then compare their thinking.

You may be surprised.

Take the strongest ideas, challenge the weak ones and add something none of those systems possesses:

Your experience.

That's where I think sales is heading

The winners won't necessarily be the companies with the most AI.

And they certainly won't be the salespeople with the most subscriptions.

The winners will be the people who understand where AI can remove friction, where it can improve decisions and where it should get out of the way.

My rule is becoming very simple:

Automate the admin.

Accelerate the thinking.

Protect the relationship.

Because the objective isn't to use more AI.

The objective is to spend less time doing things machines can do so we have more time doing the things humans do brilliantly.

Where in your sales process could AI save you the most time without damaging the human relationship?

Frank Furness
<frank@frankfurness.com>

How to Fight the Forgetting Curve After Employee Training



Bradford R. Glaser | 30 min read

Training programs are an investment. Between facilitators, materials, lost work hours and sometimes travel costs, the expenses add up fast – and then employees walk back to their desks and forget half of what they just learned within about two days. For any manager or HR professional who spent weeks just to get that budget approved, it's a pretty painful result to have to sit with.

Hermann Ebbinghaus figured this out nearly 150 years ago. His research (what we now call the forgetting curve) showed that memory loss after a session follows a pretty sharp downward slope. Without any reinforcement, that decline is relentless. As much as 70% of new information can fade within the first day alone, and close to 90% of it may be gone by the end of the week, which is just how human memory works on its own.

The organizations that actually make training stick treat it as a continuing process – not a single event with a hard end date. Spaced repetition, active review, on-the-job

practice and steady peer support all help cut back on the effects of that forgetting curve. None of this takes a massive budget or a full operational overhaul. What it does take is a bit of intention and a plan for keeping that learning active even after the session ends.

Let's get started with some of the best ways to make employee training knowledge stick!

- **Why New Training Fades from Memory So Fast**
- **Spaced Sessions vs One-Time Events**
- **Let Active Recall Do the Hard Work**
- **Make New Skills Stick on the Job**
- **Does the 70-20-10 Model Really Work**
- **How Peers and Managers Help New Skills Stick**
- **The Right Habits Can Make Your Training Stick**

Why New Training Fades from Memory So Fast

The retention numbers here are pretty hard to ignore. Within 24 hours of a training

session, employees have already forgotten roughly 70% of what they just covered. Give it a full week (with no follow-up or reinforcement whatsoever), and the number creeps up to 90%.

Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve puts a name to this. Hermann Ebbinghaus was a German psychologist who spent years in the late 1800s studying how memory decays, and his data revealed something fascinating. Memory drops fast, and almost all of that loss happens right up front. The first 24 hours do the most damage, and then the decline starts to level off, so by the end of a week, anything that hasn't been revisited is more or less gone.



A new hire walks out of a Friday workshop with confidence (they were locked in the whole time, sure that they knew the material), and by Monday morning they're back at their desk trying to work through the same process, and suddenly nothing feels right – that's not a failure on their part, and it doesn't come down to effort or attention. The brain is literally wired to drop information that isn't actively used. Whatever the brain doesn't get a reason to hold onto, it lets go. Brand new information is at the biggest disadvantage here, because it hasn't had any time to be reinforced or connected to anything else yet.

It's a problem that tends to get underestimated more than it should. Plenty of organizations pour resources into the training day itself (the materials, the facilitators, the time pulled off the floor) and then send employees on their way with no structured follow-up whatsoever. The forgetting curve does not care how polished

the session was or how into it everyone in the room looked. Without reinforcement after the fact, the outcome is usually going to be the same.

Spaced Sessions vs One-Time Events

Microlearning is where all this starts to come together – as a format, it's built around focused bursts of content (a five-minute video, a quick refresher module, one single concept that gets reinforced and revisited over time). A six-hour training dump on day one isn't how the brain works best, and microlearning accounts for that – it spreads those touchpoints out across days and weeks, which is what the brain needs to move information from short-term memory to long-term memory.

Forgetting is just what memory does without enough spacing between sessions.

Research on the forgetting curve has shown that we can lose a portion of new information within just a day or two if nothing is done to reinforce it – it's a problem when most training programs treat a single event as the end of the process.



A single all-day workshop (no matter how well it's designed or delivered) can only take you so far. The content might land well in the room, and attendees will probably leave feeling motivated. Without a structured follow-up, though, most of what was covered won't stick past the weekend. Multiple shorter sessions spread across just a few days will produce dramatically better retention than any one-time event ever will. It's also worth mentioning that repeated exposure

tends to build more confidence over time, which makes employees more likely to apply what they've learned.

When employees go back to review their material (and how often they do it) matters just as much as what that material actually covers. Get the timing right, and most of the other pieces will work themselves out.

Let Active Recall Do the Hard Work

Active retrieval is the second big factor working against the forgetting curve, and the way it works is more or less the opposite of how most training programs are designed.

Most employees who go back through their notes or rewatch a training video walk away feeling like they've learned something – but that feeling is mostly wrong. Recognition comes to them. The brain sees something familiar and registers it as knowledge even when it can't reproduce that information on its own. Retrieval is the harder part, and it's also where learning actually takes place.

Active retrieval is what forces the brain to do some work. Quizzes, simulations, practice scenarios – these push employees to pull information straight from memory, with no hints or prompts to fall back on. That retrieval effort is what strengthens the neural connection to the information. Every time the brain has to dig for a bit of information, that memory gets a little stronger and a little harder to forget. It's worth having an honest conversation with your team about why self-testing feels so uncomfortable for so many employees.



Employees usually associate quizzes with judgment, which leaves them more focused on

what they don't know than on improvement. If that's the culture your training program has built up without meaning to, it's something worth changing. Quizzes and practice scenarios should feel low-stakes and legitimately helpful – not like a performance review in a different form. A slight change in framing can go a long way toward getting employees to use retrieval exercises on their own.

At this stage we're trying to build stronger memory through practice – not to grade performance and not to get into job tasks just yet. That part comes later.

Make New Skills Stick on the Job

A new skill has a pretty short shelf life if you don't put it to use soon. The research on this points in the same direction, and most of us have felt it for ourselves: that slow fade where what you learned starts to slip the longer it sits. The fastest way to make something stick is to use it in a situation with actual stakes on the line.

An employee finishes a morning training session on a brand-new project management tool. That same afternoon, they open it up and use it for their workload. By the end of the day, the learning curve is nearly behind them – and they got through it in a real setting.



Managers have a big part to play in whether any of this sticks. A great training program with no follow-through from management is an expensive afternoon. The manager who circles back with their team afterward, finds the right openings to put those new skills to

work and makes room to apply what they learned out in the field – that’s the person who makes it stick.

Even so, most organizations still treat the completion certificate as the finish line. The box gets checked, the employee heads back to their desk, and the new skill just never gets used. A few weeks go by, and it’s nearly all gone – or close enough to gone that it might as well be. That space between picking up a new skill and putting it to work is right where most of the training investment tends to slip away.

A certificate at the end of a program is a nice touch. But if that’s where the value ends, it’s worth asking what you actually paid for.

Does the 70-20-10 Model Really Work

At some point, most of us have sat through a full day of employee training and walked away feeling like none of it stuck – and there’s a reason for that. It’s not about you, and it’s not about your team either. A well-researched framework called the 70-20-10 model explains this, and it gets at why formal training on its own almost never produces results that stick.



The 70-20-10 model breaks workplace learning into three buckets. The largest share (a full 70% of it) comes from on-the-job experience, which is the day-to-day process of working problems out in situations as they come up. Another 20% comes from the colleagues around you, whether that’s a manager giving you feedback or a coworker walking you through something new. The last

10% is where formal training actually lives.

That last number is one that most organizations don’t sit with long enough. A large share of their time, budget and energy pours into that 10% – and then they’re left asking themselves why retention rates drop off once a training day ends. Once formal training gets treated as just one part of a much bigger picture, the entire way a company runs its employee development has to change.

Think back on the skills that you’ve mastered over the years, and odds are a workshop or a slide deck didn’t have much to do with it. Most genuine expertise gets built through repetition, feedback and plenty of trial and error – mostly on the job. The 70-20-10 model is a framework for putting a number to what most of us had already figured out from experience.

More organizations are restructuring their learning programs around this model, and the retention numbers they’re reporting back are pretty strong. Most of the gains are rooted in the experience-driven 70% – which is the piece that the earlier section on on-the-job reinforcement was laying the groundwork for.

The social side of learning (the 20%) does warrant its own conversation – it’s what the next section is all about.

How Peers and Managers Help New Skills Stick

The 70-20-10 model puts a full 20% into social learning. That number didn’t land there by accident. Managers, mentors and coworkers are the ones who choose whether a training lesson has any staying power – or if it just fades away within the first few weeks on the job.

A mentor who stops mid-hallway to ask “remember what we talked about with this?” is doing something that no e-learning module can come close to replicating. That unscripted second of reinforcement is actually one of the best retention tools a workplace has. It’s casual, it’s low-pressure, and it ties what they

learned directly back to something that's happening right in front of them – it's just where lessons stick.



Peer accountability tends to beat out solo willpower by a pretty wide margin. When a new hire knows that a colleague will check back on their progress, the drive to put what they've learned to use goes up considerably. Collaborative problem-solving has the same effect – it reinforces those lessons in a situation with stakes attached.

One of the biggest mistakes I see after training ends is leaving new employees to figure it out on their own. Without standard check-ins or a reliable point of contact in place, those first few weeks can get pretty isolating. That isolation will accelerate the forgetting curve faster than almost anything else.

A peer pairing system is worth putting in place here. Pair a new hire with a person who already knows the job well, and you have yourself a natural feedback loop, a reliable point of contact and a place where they can ask questions without feeling like they're being tested. It's a low-cost move that keeps the working knowledge alive even after the first week of training is over.

The Right Habits Can Make Your Training Stick

Memory fades fast – the brain just doesn't hold onto information the way we'd want it to, and left on its own, no amount of wishing will change that. The forgetting curve is a well-documented pattern. Still, it responds well to the right habits. Spread learning out

over time, give employees enough room to practice what they've learned, and build a culture where managers and peers reinforce new skills, and a one-time training event can become something that sticks.

You don't need to rebuild your entire training program from scratch to see a difference. Even one or two of these ideas, if you try them out this week, can already start to move things in the right direction. A steady change in how you reinforce what you teach can go a long way over time.

With that in mind, the quality of the training experience itself matters just as much as what comes after it. If the delivery is scattered or the content just isn't landing with the employees in the room, the best reinforcement plan in the world will have a hard time doing its job.



A shaky foundation can make everything that follows harder; it's the gap our Classroom Training 101 at HRDQ was built to fill. It gives facilitators the tools they need to run engaging and well-organized sessions and work through the types of situations that come up in a room that can derail a training before it ever gets started, so the learning has a chance to actually stick. Great delivery and great reinforcement do need each other. Get them right, and that's when training starts to feel worth the time and money ■

Source:

https://hrdqstore.com/blog/how-fight-forgetting-curve/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=blog-parkinsons-law-091826&utm_content=read&utm_source=HRDQ+Contacts&utm_campaign=9e2d50419f-S%3A+Blog+-+Parkinson%E2%80%99s+Law&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c8fe039181-3ece1aa917-628088873&mc_cid=9e2d50419f&mc_eid=ac740f42c1



T.O.M
Top-of-Mind
#19



SUPER EL NINO WRATH OF EL NATURE

Locomotive gone loco

Whatever else it may, or may not have done, Artificial Intelligence (AI), or Super Intelligence as Donald the Denier would have it, has sequestered (read impounded) the world's attention. The AI race is on, with the two lead combatants summing with a huge flourish, sounding alarm bells around runaway artificial general intelligence (AGI) and its capacity for taking the bit between its teeth and overriding all attempts to rein it in. So, while the world panics about what might await it around the corner, Nature has arrived, largely unannounced, with a sledgehammer that threatens death and destruction in the here and now.

Pakistan in uncharted waters

Zaki Abbas lays it on the line in brutal fashion (Dawn, September 24, 2026). 2027 is most likely to become hottest year ever. El Nino may impact monsoon, bring droughts, and could cause 451,000 deaths as a result. With 2027 likely to become the hottest year due to the cumulative effects of global warming and El Nino, Pakistan is in uncharted waters, as this weather pattern could push the country toward food insecurity and extreme temperatures.

“Nature has arrived, largely unannounced, with a sledgehammer that threatens death and destruction in the here and now” – author

According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and climate scientists, a very strong El Nino increases the likelihood of significant shifts in temperature and rainfall patterns across the globe, including Pakistan, whose southern provinces can experience drought-like conditions.

Hunger epidemic

The global mean surface temperature has already increased by 1.4°C since the pre-industrial era, but this “super El Nino”, with its natural warming, could add 0.3°C to this number, pushing surface temperatures to 1.7°C above pre-industrial levels. The World Food Program noted El Nino is set to sharply increase hunger, with 274 million people in 45 countries forecast to be acutely food insecure by the end of 2027, 49 million more than today.

World Health Organization's Teresa Zakaria has branded it

“a significant public health threat” and a “risk multiplier”. “The most severe impacts will be experienced when climate shocks intersect with weak health systems, limited access to healthcare, food insecurity, displacement and humanitarian crisis,” she warns, urging immediate action.

Horrendous El Nino

Dr Fahad Saeed, a leading climate scientist at Berlin-based Climate Analytics, compared the current ‘gigantic El Nino’ to the one in 1877-78, the “most severe on record”, that caused millions of deaths.

Pakistan has already received below-normal monsoon rainfall in June (19 per cent deficit), July (11pc), and August (23pc), according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

Strong El Nino events becoming frequent

Dr. Regina Rodrigues, professor of physical oceanography and climate at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil, noted that climate models show that strong El Nino events are becoming frequent. The period between two strong El Nino events used to be around 15 years (1982-83, 1997-98, 2015-16 events), but it was then reduced to nine years when we had the 2023-24 El Nino. “And now we are having another really strong El Nino, and it's been only three years since. This is exactly what climate models forecast: increased frequency and stronger events.”

“This weather pattern could push the country toward food insecurity and extreme temperatures” – Zaki Abbas (Dawn, September 24, 2026)

This year's El Nino weather pattern could lead to 451,000 additional heat-related deaths worldwide through February as it turbocharges global temperatures, according to projections published by AFP.

Heat deaths escalating

The Sahel region in Africa could have an additional 66,800 heat deaths compared to a normal year, with nearly half of that number in Nigeria alone. An additional 19,300 are projected in Indonesia and 19,400 in the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia. The toll could reach 15,800 in India and 13,300 in Brazil.

Meanwhile, the UN has received just one-fifth of the USD202 million requested to prepare for food crises caused by eL Nino in 22 high risk countries as reported by AFP (TNI, September 26, 2026). More than half of the 22 highest-risk countries are in Africa, but others are spread across Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. The United Nations said this week that millions of people in Somalia alone already face high levels of hunger, with acute malnutrition among children set to worsen as El Nino hits.

Food aid in a jam

The UN's World Food Program (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) requested \$202 million in June to support nearly nine million people in these countries. But they have received only around \$40 million, Rein Paulsen, director of emergencies and resilience at the FAO, told AFP in Nairobi. "We have early warnings. We understand what's required... however, funding is a very real challenge that's limiting our ability to do what we know can mitigate and minimize the impact of either flooding or droughts," he said.

Oceanic Hypoxic Dead Zones escalating

Robert Hunziker is keeping a sharp eye on the health of our oceans, and what he has to report is hairy-scary in the extreme, as if we weren't already overwhelmed by the bad news. Oceanic Hypoxic Dead Zones, meaning low or depleted oxygen zones, have increased by more than 300%, up from 150 recorded sites in 2000 to over 500 in 2026 (TNI, September 19, 2026).

"The most severe impacts will be experienced when climate shocks intersect with weak health systems, limited access to healthcare, food insecurity, displacement and humanitarian crisis" – Teresa Zakaria (World Health Organization)

According to Scripps Institution of Oceanography, oceans have absorbed 90% of Earth's excess heat since 1970, saving humanity from itself. If not for the oceans, that amount of heat would cook people alive. Scripps references a jarring study: "The heat energy absorbed by the ocean's upper 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) between 1955 and 2010 would have warmed Earth's atmosphere +36C (64.8F) rather than the current +1.5C above preindustrial." That's lethal!

Permian-Triassic mass extinction event

"Marine biologists tracking current trends note a terrifying parallel to Earth's past. Studies analyzing the Permian-Triassic mass extinction event (which wiped out 96% of marine species 252 million years ago) confirmed that the primary driver was metabolic intolerance to warming, oxygen-depleted waters — the exact conditions human-driven climate change is forcing upon modern oceans." (Scientists Finally Solved the Mystery of Earth's Greatest Mass Extinction, ScienceDaily, July 12, 2026)

Time is short, maybe too short

Knowledgeable people who are not afraid to speak out believe time is short, maybe too short, for something constructive, assuming it's not already too late. There are some scientists who believe it is too late. But, come on, nobody wants to believe it's too late or admit to it. Still, some do. The only sure-fire way

"We have early warnings. We understand what's required... however, funding is a very real challenge that's limiting our ability to do what we know can mitigate and minimize the impact of either flooding or droughts" – Rein Paulsen (director of emergencies and resilience at the FAO)

to salvation is removal of CO2 that's already there. But the technology to accomplish this is both weak and inadequate.

Meanwhile, in line with the Permian-Triassic, marine heatwaves are becoming more frequent, longer lasting, and hotter. Their average duration has tripled since the 1940s, with some events spiking ocean temperatures by up to 5C, according to an April study, which is the temperature that marine life cannot survive, killing 30,000 fish off the coast of Australia) These extremes ripple through the entire food web, from plankton to predators... If whales that can travel thousands of kilometers still can't find food to eat, it's a sign of large-scale disruption,"

"El Nino is set to sharply increase hunger, with 274 million people in 45 countries forecast to be acutely food insecure by the end of 2027, 49 million more than today" – World Food Program

Regarding offshore water temperatures during the Australian dead fish incident of 2025, according to ABC.net.au/news, "Sea surface temperatures are about 4 to 5 degrees Celsius above the long-term average in the north coast bioregion and 2–3C more in the Gascoyne bioregion."

Suffocation

Every 1C temperature increase of warming water holds 2% less dissolved oxygen. A spike of 5C is devastating because cold-blooded marine metabolism speeds up with rising temperatures, meaning more oxygen is required to survive at the very time when less is available. This results in hypoxic dead zones. According to the UN, "hypoxic (or dead) zones, where oxygen levels are so low that most marine life cannot survive, now span 4.5 million km²," equivalent in size to all of Southeast Asia.

"Studies analyzing the Permian-Triassic mass extinction event, which wiped out 96% of marine species 252 million years ago, confirmed that the primary driver was metabolic intolerance to warming, oxygen-depleted waters, the exact conditions human-driven climate change is forcing upon modern oceans" – ScienceDaily, (July 12, 2026)

So, where do we go from here? Perhaps it's time to bring spiritualists into the loop who strongly suggest the burying of the many hatchets that incessantly draw blood and bring untold misery to the planet and its people, and drastically scale back our seemingly insatiable appetite for more and every more, and give Nature the respect it deserves, and now demands at the point of a sword, as it were. Human, and not artificial intelligence, needs to be the lead goose that can save the day for humanity, InshaAllah ■

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