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Knowledge Workers' Transformation into "Super Individuals" and Enterprise Organizational Change in the AI Era

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Abstract: AI technology is reshaping the capability boundaries of knowledge workers, giving rise to "super individuals." Based on incomplete contract theory, this paper analyzes the structural misallocation of residual rights triggered by super individuals and reveals the deep-seated tension between super individuals and traditional organizations through case studies. The research indicates that by reducing organizational friction to release individual efficiency, reconstructing collaboration processes with AI Agents, and reshaping the allocation of residual rights, the trend of "super-individualization" can force organizations to transform from hierarchical control to platform empowerment. In the current AI era, organizational change should not aim to replace humans with AI, but should focus on reconstructing production relations around human-machine symbiosis, allowing organizations to evolve into "evolutionary organizations" that can sustainably accommodate and inspire super individuals.

Keywords: Super individual; Organizational change; AI era; Knowledge worker; Incomplete contract

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1. Introduction

Since 2025, "one-person companies" and "super individuals" have become hot topics in the business world. With the aid of AI tools, an increasing number of people can complete work that previously required an entire team. Li Zhifei, CEO of Mobvoi, used AI to build a prototype of an enterprise collaboration product from scratch in just three days, with over 100,000 lines of code—a task that would take a traditional team months. Meanwhile, after Dong Yuhui resigned from Oriental Selection, the original platform's revenue for fiscal year 2025 fell by 32.7% year-on-year, and net profit plummeted from 249 million yuan to 6.191 million yuan. These cases collectively point to a question that needs to be pondered and answered: when individual capabilities are amplified tenfold or hundredfold by AI, and personal value exceeds that of the enterprise platform, can the bureaucratic governance structure still remain effective?

Scholars Song and Li pointed out that the phenomenon of super employees leads to a structural misallocation of residual claim rights and residual control rights, thereby causing a failure of the incentive mechanism [1]. This paper conducts research and discussion on the generative logic of super individuals, the structural conflict with traditional organizations, and the path for enterprises to achieve compatibility through organizational change.

2. Generative logic and structural tension of super individuals

2.1. Definition of super individual

Super employees mainly refer to individuals who create significant excess value within an organization by virtue of unique professional skills, creative abilities, or personal brand influence, possessing prominent competitive advantages in both internal and external corporate markets [1]. Entering the AI era, the connotation of super individuals has further evolved. A survey by Tencent Research Institute points out that AI super individuals possess four structural characteristics: (1) Taking AI as the default starting point for work (AI First); (2) A capability leap of more than 10 times; (3) Extremely high proactivity; (4) Influence spilling over from the individual to the team [2].

From the perspective of technical foundation, this evolution is the replacement of the execution layer of knowledge work by AI. A study by Anthropic based on 100,000 conversations shows that AI can reduce task completion time by about 80%, and some tasks can even be shortened by 96% [2]. When execution labor such as coding, copywriting, and data analysis is taken over by AI, the core value of individuals can shift from execution ability to judgment ability. However, parts such as problem definition, solution selection, quality control, and creative generation are still segments that AI cannot replace [3].

2.2. Structural conflict between super individuals and traditional organizations

The tension between super individuals and traditional bureaucracy can be understood from the following three levels: First, the property rights level. Traditional organizations can achieve the matching of residual claim rights and residual control rights through bureaucracy. Generally speaking, capital owners hold control rights, while employees exchange labor for fixed remuneration. However, when the capabilities of super individuals become the core source of enterprise value creation, the above rights allocation will become unbalanced [4]. For example, Dong Yuhui's personal IP contributed most of the traffic and revenue of Oriental Selection, but his residual claim rights did not match his contribution. It was under the influence of this rights imbalance that the "Little Essay" storm erupted.

Second, the process level. Essentially, bureaucracy uses standardization in exchange for predictability, improving organizational efficiency through division of labor refinement, hierarchical approval, and process control. Conversely, AI super individuals pursue full-stack capabilities more in their work. In the process of one person connecting the entire chain of product, technology, and operations, what is least needed is process approval and hierarchical reporting. Li Zhifei pointed out: "The individual heroism of super individuals might be a disaster within the organization. Files stored locally, keys hardcoded in code, processes only in one person's brain—all fail once entering the organization." In other words, once the individual heroism of super individuals is placed in an organization, efficiency actually declines.

Third, the cultural level. Bureaucracy relies on consistency and substitutability, while super individuals depend on uniqueness and irreplaceability. After Oriental Selection implemented a platform strategy, it subjected anchors to standardized management, compressed creative space, and adjusted revenue-sharing ratios, eventually leading to the collective resignation of four core anchors. In fact, this is not a matter of management style, but a conflict between two underlying logics: platformization requires depersonalization, while super IPs require personalization.

3. Case analysis

3.1. Oriental Selection: The dilemma between personal IP and platformization

In July 2024, Dong Yuhui resigned from Oriental Selection. As of May 31, 2025, Oriental Selection's revenue was 4.392 billion yuan, a year-on-year decrease of 32.7%; net profit from continuing operations was only 61.91 million yuan, a decrease of 97.5% from the same period last year (249 million yuan) (Source: Oriental Selection Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Report). After Dong Yuhui went solo, the "Walking with Hui" livestream room saw continuous climbs in traffic and revenue, while the original platform fell into the predicament of traffic decline and performance turbulence. This reveals the fundamental paradox of the live streaming e-commerce industry. Essentially, live streaming sales belong to personalized sales, where the anchor's personal influence has a significant impact on profits. However, for enterprises to achieve long-term development, they should implement depersonalized modern governance. When fans recognize "Dong Yuhui" rather than "Oriental Selection," the enterprise falls into a passive situation where success and failure both depend on the anchor.

Oriental Selection's dilemma illustrates that when the value creation of super individuals is highly coupled with the enterprise platform, a "peaceful separation" is the least bad outcome. But the question is: can this conflict be avoided through optimization of organizational design?

To this end, Oriental Selection accelerated its de-top-down strategy, shifting resources from personal IPs to self-operated products and supply chain construction. As of November 2025, the company launched a total of 801 self-operated products, with the transaction value of self-operated products accounting for approximately 52.8% of the company's total GMV [5]. However, the cost of this transformation is equally clear: the content distinctiveness of the company's knowledge-based sales is diminishing, and it is becoming an ordinary live streaming e-commerce business.

3.2. Mobvoi: Reconstructing super organizations with AI

Facing consecutive losses, the answer given by Mobvoi CEO Li Zhifei was to negate the traditional organization and reconstruct a super organization. He implemented a radical organizational change, cutting inefficient business lines. The employee scale shrank from over a thousand to just over a hundred, middle management was largely abolished, and R&D personnel were reduced by about two-thirds [6].

In fact, downsizing was only a means. Analyzing its core logic, it was about using AI to reconstruct collaboration processes. Mobvoi launched the AI-native collaboration platform CodeBanana, embedding AI Agents into core business processes such as R&D, marketing, and operations. Based on this model, communication and execution merged into one. Besides answering questions, the Agent would also directly call tools and advance execution. Work that previously required a week of scheduling could be completed in as little as 28 minutes with AI collaboration support.

According to Mobvoi's financial data, the company's loss narrowed by 90.5% in 2025, per capita revenue soared from 542,000 yuan to 978,000 yuan, and total employee costs dropped from 81 million yuan to 41.9 million yuan. However, this experiment also brought severe challenges to the company: where will growth come from after cost reduction? CodeBanana is still in the early verification stage. Whether this model can evolve from an internal tool for Mobvoi into a promotable commercial product is determined by its employee adoption rate, which is the first threshold it must cross for organizational change.

3.3. Alibaba Cloud: From super individual to evolutionary organization

If Mobvoi provided a sample of radical reconstruction, the "super organization" concept proposed by Alibaba Cloud is closer to a path of gradual evolution. Alibaba Cloud's Chief Talent Officer, Fang Xiaomin, proposed that in the AI era, all organizations must answer three questions: How can everyone become a "super individual?" Can the organization keep up with the pace of AI evolution? How to build a "human-machine symbiosis" aggregate organization?

In practice, Alibaba Cloud mainly focused on cognitive restart, capability and system reconstruction, cultural reshaping, and collaboration reconstruction. At the capability level, Alibaba Cloud proposed the concept of full-stack talent, encouraging employees to become their own large models, growing into generalists with both technical and business comprehensive capabilities through continuous learning. At the organizational level, Alibaba Cloud built a CRD operating system, using AI to endow the organization with the abilities of sensing, deciding, acting, learning, and evolving. CRD supports the dynamic switching of multiple organizational forms such as permanent establishments, campaigns, and projects. Meanwhile, through the 3R real-time job responsibility analysis, intelligent agents identify trend changes in job roles and capture new species in the AI era.

4. Organizational change paths and implications

4.1. Comparison of three governance models

Synthesizing the above cases, the governance models for enterprises responding to the challenge of super individuals can be extracted, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Three models of enterprise governance in the era of super individuals

Dimension	Oriental Selection (property rights transfer type)	Mobvoi (decentralized type)	Alibaba Cloud (platform empowerment type)
Core logic	Exchanging property rights for control rights	Replacing middle management with AI	Activating individuals via platform
Attitude towards super individuals	Depersonalization, platform replacement	Full-stack, everyone can become a super individual	Empowerment type, supporting individual evolution
Focus of organizational change	Self-operated products and supply chain construction	AI Agent reconstructing collaboration processes	CRD operating system and full-stack talent cultivation
Risks	Losing content distinctiveness and user stickiness	Unclear growth path after cost reduction	Long change cycle, slow short-term reduction

The strategic focuses represented by the three models are different. Oriental Selection attempted to stabilize the team by transferring residual claim rights but still focused on replacing the individual with a depersonalized platform. Mobvoi attempted to thoroughly reconstruct the human-centered organizational logic, making AI the main executor and even organizer of the organization. Alibaba Cloud falls between the two, emphasizing the accommodation and inspiration of super individuals through systematic organizational capability building.

4.2. Core paths

Combining the above cases, a universal change path can be summarized:

First, reduce organizational friction to release individual efficiency. Tencent Research Institute proposed the formula: Organizational Competitiveness = Talent Density × AI Leverage / Organizational Friction.

The biggest problem with traditional bureaucracy is excessive organizational friction. Approval processes, hierarchical communication, and cross-departmental coordination all consume the time released by AI efficiency improvements. The reason business delivery volume has not surged with the explosion of employee AI tool usage is that individual output is blocked at process nodes. Essentially, Mobvoi's abolition of the middle layer and Alibaba Cloud's implementation of distributed organization battle team models are both reducing organizational friction.

Second, reconstruct collaboration processes with AI Agents. Currently, many enterprises limit AI implementation to the level of "equipping employees with tools." However, true organizational change requires letting AI enter the collaboration chain. Li Zhifei emphasized that the underlying logic of CodeBanana is that execution happens where communication occurs; Alibaba Cloud's human-machine collaboration evolution model similarly indicates that AI should advance from a tool to a partner, ultimately achieving intelligent collaboration between human, machine, and human.

Third, reshape the allocation of residual rights. The conflict between super individuals and traditional organizations is essentially a conflict of rights allocation. Song and Li pointed out that corporate governance structures can converge into two equilibrium forms: property rights integration and decentralized robustness. The former binds the interests of super individuals with the organization through equity incentives, etc. The latter reduces reliance on a single super individual through platform empowerment. The choice between the two paths is determined by the industry attributes and strategic positioning of the enterprise.

5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of super individuals in the AI era is essentially a forcing of production relation changes by a productivity leap. Just as the steam engine spawned the factory system and the computer spawned bureaucracy, AI is spawning a new organizational form that can both accommodate individual super capabilities and aggregate individual efficiency into organizational efficiency. This paper reveals the direction and path of change through cases, but super organizations are still in the early exploration stage. Mobvoi's CodeBanana has not yet found a stable growth path, and Oriental Selection's platform transformation is still in the throes of pain. For most enterprises, a more urgent problem is how to prevent AI from widening the internal efficiency gap within organizations. When some employees become super individuals while others stagnate, organizational rifts may be more fatal than external competition. AI will not replace managers, but managers who use AI will replace those who do not; AI will not eliminate organizations, but organizations that can accommodate AI will eliminate those that cannot. The evolution of organizations has just begun.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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