Elevate: Human-Centered AI Enablement at Sub-Zero Group

From Experimentation to a Governed, Value-Driven Enterprise Capability

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Introductions



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Where We Started

The journey began with individual curiosity in December 2022 — years of experimentation in pockets and silos before the team recognized this was fundamentally a people challenge, not a technology challenge.

Dec 2022

Spark

Experimentation began on personal devices.

2023–2024

Exploration

AI governance policy established and continuously updated.

Rolled out access to tools.

Employees explored independently with limited coordination across teams.

Late 2024

Strategy Set

Platform-first approach aligned AI to major platform investments.

Focus remained on technology enablement in silos.

2025

Turning Point

Launched:

- AI Champions network
- Center for Excellence
- Created Business Optimization role
- Elevate program

Today

Now

Governance, innovation within governance, continuous knowledge-sharing, and evolving change management.

Addressing organizational resistance with structure.

Crystallizing insight: "This was a people challenge, not a technology challenge." — The shift that redefined the entire program.

What Is Elevate?

Elevate is Sub-Zero's internal learning and innovation platform designed to encourage every employee to think differently to make AI the way we work, not a separate initiative.

Learn & Share

- Lunch and Learn series celebrates successes, distributes best practices, and shares lessons to prevent repeated mistakes
- Bi-monthly Champion meetings and async channels foster cross-department collaboration and shared problem-solving
- Weekly news stream and central SharePoint sites
- Podcast to share use cases, hear from leadership, and promote resources

Champions Network

- One AI Champion per business unit drives adoption and surfaces opportunities from the frontline
- Champions bridge top-down governance with bottom-up insight across every department

10/20/70 Learning Model

- 10% formal training, 20% mentoring and coaching, 70% hands-on practice — building lasting, practical skills
- Framed as business capability development — deliberately not labeled "AI" — to signal people-first transformation

By design: *the program is not called "AI" — it is framed as building business capability and developing people*

Building Capability at Every Level

Scaling AI it requires differentiated expectations and learning paths by role, building a sustained capability system across the entire workforce.

Level 1 4 hrs	**AI Aware**	**All Employees** Responsible Use Policy, approved tools, risk identification, Copilot fundamentals	100% target
Level 2 12 hrs	**AI Practitioner**	**Knowledge Workers** Advanced Copilot, prompt engineering, AI-assisted analysis, use case design	70% target
Level 3 24 hrs	**AI Champion**	**BU Leads & Champions** Use case scoping, ROI modeling, change management, governance, agent design	15% target
Level 4 40+ hrs	**AI Builder**	**Developers & Data Teams** GitHub Copilot, LLM integration, RAG architecture, model evaluation, security compliance	8% target

Proof the Approach Works

Real business results, earned through disciplined experimentation and a bias toward proving value before scaling.

Manufacturing Maintenance Assistant

Success Story

AI solution targeting triage support and workorder creation for manufacturing maintenance technicians to provide immediate information and reliable documentation at scale that brings legacy knowledge to all technicians.

Validated the model: start narrow, prove value, then expand to adjacent workflows.

Ivy Initiative

Org-Wide Proof Point

Demonstrates to the broader organization that there is tangible, credible value in AI adoption — a visible proof point for skeptics and a catalyst for cross-department confidence.

Shifted internal narrative from "AI is experimental" to "AI delivers real results."

What Made It Work

Employee Autonomy Model

Providing tool access and empowering employees to discover use cases has seeded bottom-up innovation across the organization.

Disciplined Scoping

Start with broad exploration, then narrow to a specific, provable use case — a discipline the program now teaches explicitly.

Business Case Discipline

Every initiative requires a business case. Capturing savings and reinvesting them effectively turns optimization into compounding value.

> *Like a casino that makes money on every little bit* — **optimization delivers the real value.**

Lessons Learned

What We Would Do Differently

The willingness to share failures openly is itself a competitive differentiator — organizations that only celebrate wins stop learning.

> ***Sharing what didn't work is how we prevent others from repeating the same mistakes.***

Lessons for the Next Chapter

Idea Registry
Establish a registry of ideas upfront; without it, efforts are duplicated and concepts lost visibility.

Strategy Alignment
Tie every initiative back to enterprise strategy from day one; enabling technology in isolation does not create organizational alignment.

Failure Culture
The organization is not comfortable discussing failures; deliberate effort is required to normalize learning from what did not work.

Problem-Solving Capability
Teaching problem solving and business case building is as important as teaching AI tools; capability without judgment creates waste.

Change Management
Change management cannot be an afterthought; resistance is predictable so address it with structured communication and leader enablement.

The Future — Where We Are Headed

The people challenge ahead is not adoption — it is making AI so embedded in how we work that we stop talking about it as separate.

Shift 01

Enterprise Process Optimization

AI becomes the primary vehicle for every employee to operate as a knowledge worker — optimization is the core business capability.

Shift 02

Data Context as the Frontier

Cataloging context so data can operate effectively within and across AI systems — enabling agents to reason with organizational knowledge.

Shift 03

Agent Governance at Scale

One orchestrating agent observes cost and usability across the enterprise agent ecosystem — moving from experiments to governed production.

Shift 04

Leadership Evolution

Managers learn to direct and manage agentic teams and AI resources. Leadership capability expands to include human-AI team design.

Shift 05

Hire for Ability, Not Skill

Recruiting pivots to prioritize learning agility and problem-solving capacity over point-in-time technical skills — building durable human capital.

Goal: Level maturity across the entire workforce **— not just pockets of excellence. AI becomes how we work, not what we talk about.**

QUESTIONS & INSIGHTS