



WHAT ATLISSIAN REVEALS ABOUT AI, LEADERSHIP, TALENT AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

A CASE STUDY BY KIM SEELING SMITH

For more than a decade, Kim Seeling Smith has been helping leaders make sense of the forces reshaping business, talent and the Future of Work.

"A company being disrupted by AI is laying people off in the name of AI."



This is not just a layoff story. It is a case study in the exact forces Kim has been speaking and writing about for years.

A NOTE FROM KIM

I've spent the last decade tracking the forces reshaping business, leadership, talent and the Future of Work.

What happened at Atlassian is not just a news story. It is one of the clearest real-time examples I've seen of those forces colliding in public.

This case study captures why the conversations I've been having with leaders for years now feel more urgent than ever: how to adapt to AI without creating fear, how to lead through volatility without burning trust, and how to stay relevant in a world where the rules of work are being rewritten in real time.

Atlassian is the case study.

The bigger question is how many other organisations are closer to this moment than they realise.

Kim Seeling Smith



WHY THIS CASE MATTERS

On Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 1,600 Atlassian employees were told by email that their job no longer existed.

That email followed a pre-recorded video from CEO Mike Cannon-Brookes. Affected employees were then given limited time on Slack to say goodbye before losing access.

If you were one of those 1,600 people, you went into the weekend with a very uncertain future.

But so did Atlassian.

Because this is not just a layoff story.

It is a leadership story.

A trust story.

An AI story.

And a Future of Work story.

For the last decade, I've been speaking and writing about the forces reshaping business: rapid technological change, rising volatility, and a workforce that is more informed, more selective, and less willing to accept empty values language.

Atlassian is not an isolated event.

It is a live case study in what happens when those forces collide at once.

That is why this matters to every leadership team, every HR audience, every strategy forum, and every conference trying to help people make sense of what comes next.

Because Atlassian may be today's headline.

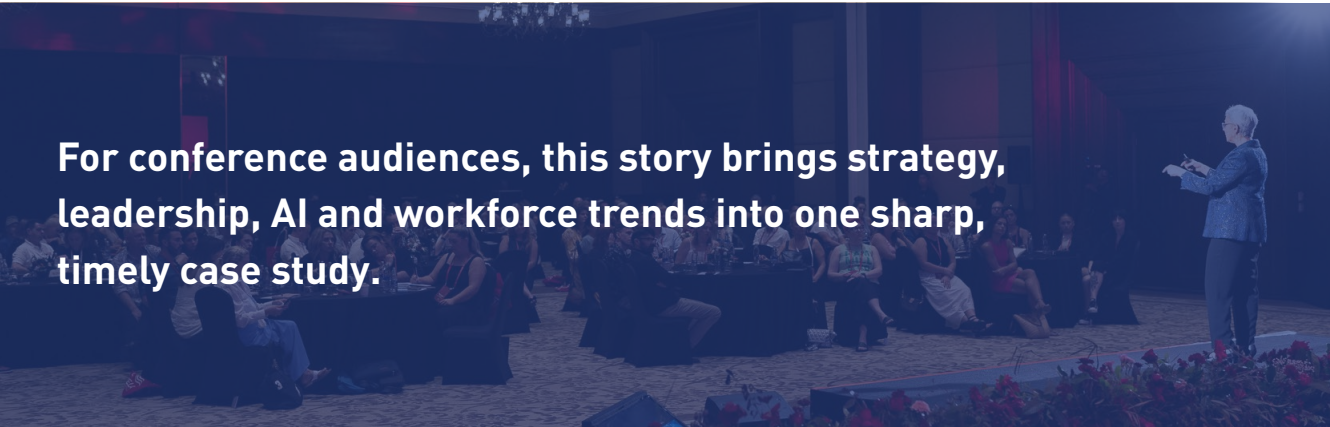
But the underlying pressures are everywhere.

WHAT THIS PIECE PROVES

- Kim's Future of Work frameworks are not theoretical
- The tensions she's tracked for years are now playing out in public
- Today's biggest workforce stories are business stories first

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*Atlassian is not an outlier.
It is a warning shot.*



For conference audiences, this story brings strategy, leadership, AI and workforce trends into one sharp, timely case study.



THE 3 DISRUPTIONS POWERING THE DECADE OF RADICAL CHANGE

For years, I've been tracking three converging forces reshaping business, leadership and work. Atlassian has become a public case study in all three.

1. AI and Technology

AI is changing how work gets done, accelerating competition, lowering barriers to entry, and reshaping the value of existing products and services.

That is the paradox at the centre of the Atlassian story:

A company being disrupted by AI is laying people off in the name of AI.

Atlassian is responding to the same force investors fear could weaken its existing product advantage. That is not a theoretical trend. That is disruption happening in real time.

2. The Polycrisis

Leaders are no longer making decisions in stable conditions.

They are navigating overlapping pressures: economic uncertainty, geopolitical instability, changing customer expectations, regulatory shifts, and fragile market confidence.

In that environment, leadership teams often confuse visible action with strategic adaptation.

They are not the same thing.

3. The Rise of the Empowered Workforce

We are seeing a fractured talent market. There is a critical talent shortage for some roles, while others are facing a glut.

At the same time, employees are refusing to play by the old rules. They have more visibility, more information — and more choice.

Future hires are paying attention. Customers are paying attention. Investors are paying attention.

People no longer judge organisations only by what they say.

They judge them by how they behave under pressure.

And that is exactly why the Atlassian case has landed so hard.

“
This is not just a tech story. It is a masterclass in the forces reshaping business, leadership and work.
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Business, Innovation & Leadership
Strategies for the decade
of radical change

[MORE INFO ON THIS KEYNOTE](#)

WHEN PRESSURE HITS, COMPANIES SPEND MORE THAN CASH. THEY SPEND TRUST.

Atlassian's first core value is "Open company, no bullshit." That is what makes this case so revealing.

Because when pressure hits, companies do not just make cost decisions. They spend what I call the Currencies of Choice (developed from over 5000 exit interviews) — the things that make talented people choose them, stay with them, and advocate for them.

In this case, four matter most.

Purpose and Aligned Values

Values matter most when they cost you something.

A company can talk about openness, trust and teamwork for years. But when the defining moment arrives, people discover whether those values are culture — or copy.

Trust and Respect

Trust is not built during the easy moments. It is tested during the hard ones.

When communication feels abrupt, impersonal, or done at a distance, confidence in leadership drops fast.

Voice and Agency

When people feel change is being done to them rather than with them, they stop believing



they have a future in the organisation. That does not just affect the people who leave. It affects the people who stay — and the people you hope to hire next.

Growth and Future Relevance

If AI is changing what the business needs, then the leadership challenge is not simply to cut.

It is to show people how they can evolve with the business.

That is the difference between transformation and replacement.

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These currencies do not get suspended during hard decisions. That's when they get tested.

BALI - INDONESIA

9 KEYS TO KEEP YOUR BEST PEOPLE FROM WALKING OUT THE DOOR

Based on over 5,000 exit interviews!

MORE INFO ON THIS KEYNOTE

WHAT BETTER LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE IN THE AGE OF AI

To be clear: this is not an argument for standing still.

AI disruption is real.

Change is necessary.

Reinvention is not optional.

But there is a profound difference between reactive adoption and strategic transformation.

Too many organisations are making workforce decisions in the name of AI before they have built the internal fluency, use cases, capability, or redesign discipline needed to create real value from it.

The better path is not fear-driven cuts.

It is:

- Building workforce fluency with practical AI tools
- Identifying where AI genuinely creates value
- Redeploying talent into higher-value work
- Reskilling people for emerging demands
- Redesigning work around human-AI collaboration
- Scaling with intention, not panic

The organisations that get this right will not be the ones that simply moved fastest.

They will be the ones that built capability without destroying trust.

That is the leadership challenge now.

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The real question is not whether AI matters. It's whether leaders know how to adopt it effectively, with a real ROI - without blowing up trust.

WHAT AUDIENCES TAKE AWAY FROM THIS STORY

- How to distinguish transformation from panic
- How to adopt AI without burning capability
- Why trust and adaptation now go hand in hand



EVERYDAY AI

From Fear to Confidence – Your Essential Guide to Thriving with AI

[MORE INFO ON THIS KEYNOTE](#)



BRING THESE INSIGHTS TO YOUR AUDIENCE

The Atlassian case is not just a commentary piece.

It is a real-time example of the exact themes Kim Seeling Smith has been forecasting, decoding and speaking on for years:

- AI disruption
- Future-ready leadership
- The empowered workforce
- Employee engagement and retention
- Career resilience in the age of AI

Kim does not simply describe trends.

She connects the dots between what is happening now, what it means next, and what leaders must do about it.



FUTURE-PROOF YOUR BUSINESS

Business, Innovation & Leadership Strategies for the decade of radical change

For business owners and leaders who need to understand the forces reshaping competitiveness, leadership and growth.

[MORE INFO ON THIS KEYNOTE](#)

9 KEYS TO KEEP YOUR BEST PEOPLE FROM WALKING OUT THE DOOR

Based on over 5,000 exit interviews!

A practical framework to improve engagement, retention, productivity and performance.

[MORE INFO ON THIS KEYNOTE](#)

EVERYDAY AI

From Fear to Confidence – Your Essential Guide to Thriving with AI

A practical, energising keynote that helps audiences move from AI anxiety to confident, capable adoption.

[MORE INFO ON THIS KEYNOTE](#)

FUTURE-PROOF YOUR CAREER

How to Use AI to Stay Relevant, Resilient, and One Step AHEAD

Designed for professionals at every level who want to stay valuable, adaptable and future-ready.

[MORE INFO ON THIS KEYNOTE](#)

**ATLASSIAN IS THE CASE STUDY.
KIM SEELING SMITH IS THE GUIDE TO WHAT IT MEANS.**



You don't need a crystal ball when you have Kim Seeling Smith's deep insights.



TESTIMONIAL



“ Thank you Kim Seeling Smith! It was such an inspiring and insightful session! Wella Red customers have now a great toolbox that they can implement in their salons!”

Guillaume Cantelou
Managing Director ANZ at Wella Company



“ I would highly recommend Kim for any business keynote. Her presentation on the future of AI was exceptional. It was one of 5 AI keynotes I've seen recently and this one definitely carried to most weight with me.”

Ben Miller
Growth Leader



“ Kim delivered an outstanding keynote at our 2025 LMG Growth Summit. She tailored her insights perfectly to our industry, making the content incredibly relevant and actionable for our audience. Kim was an absolute dream to work with—professional, collaborative, and full of energy. A true highlight of the event!”

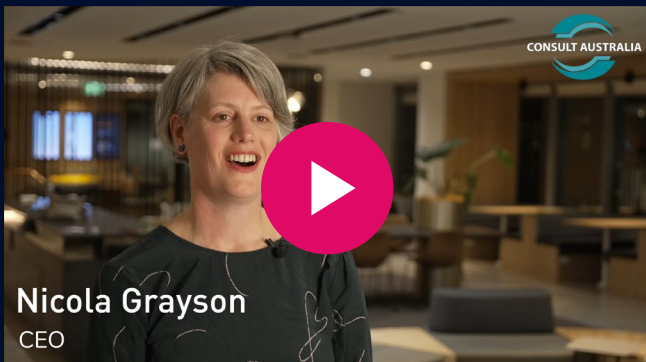
Natalia DaSilva
Senior Event Producer & Partnerships Manager



“ Working with Kim is a pleasure. Whether it is through her engaging presentations or one on one consultations Kim is an invaluable resource for any business seeking to thrive in the future.”

Kate Drews
Regional Head, ANZ, Surbana Jurong Group

ALMOST 90 ADDITIONAL TESTIMONIALS MAY BE FOUND ON KIM'S LINKEDIN PROFILE. SEE MORE >>>



Kim Seeling Smith CSP, CVP, VMP

Speaker, author, master storyteller and trend translator Kim Seeling Smith is a Business Futurist who helps organizations and individuals remain relevant, resilient and ready for anything.

Kim:

- Was awarded Top 100 Thought Leader by Thinkers360.
- Named one of the Top 101 Global Influencers on Employee Engagement.
- Is acknowledged for her innovative approach of Work by Richard Branson's 100% Human to the Future at Work initiative
- Launched her book, "Mind Reading for Managers" at SXSW in Austin,
- Co-wrote "101 Great Ways to Enhance Your Career" with mega author Brian Tracy
- Is a go to media commentator on business trends



Kim Seeling Smith with Sir Richard Branson at Ulusaba, South Africa



SEE KIM ON RADIO AND TV

