



FUTURE FORWARD >>

Building and Sustaining a
Meaningful Career in the AI Age

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Executive Summary

- Regardless of function, role, or level, **every employee must be capable of assessing how and where AI adds the most value to their job**, take steps to integrate the right technology into the right processes, and build complementary human skills.
- The concern that **AI and automation will result in mass human layoffs** remains largely unfounded.
- The **workers** who can meet employers where they are and then **suggest techniques to take AI usage to the next level will be the most marketable and valuable** to today's organizations.
- **Approximately one-third of employers in ManpowerGroup's 2025 Employment Outlook Survey said that AI cannot replace or augment human skills such as ethical judgment or personalized customer service.**
In areas where employers feel AI can make tangible contributions now, human skills gaps exist.
- **Employers who want to actively boost tool usage and productivity must provide the right AI literacy training.**
Well-designed training programs integrating real-world practice using AI tools can significantly shorten skill acquisition time.
- **Both employers and employees should proactively redesign roles to maximize human-AI collaboration**, with AI tackling routine and repeatable tasks and employees concentrating on the more nuanced activities at which humans excel. Every AI implementation should benefit from human oversight and translation.



Putting AI to Work

It's not an easy time to be an employee in today's business world. Not only are we coping with unprecedented levels of geopolitical instability, but the arrival of generative and agentic AI is transforming our jobs in real time. If we wish to be gainfully employed for the foreseeable future, we must understand how to leverage the opportunity of AI to work as an effective partner alongside smart machines.

While organizations are trying to do their part in providing us with the right skills and training, the individual has an important degree of responsibility as well. **Regardless of function, role, or level, every employee must be capable of assessing how and where AI adds the most value to their job, take steps to integrate the right technology into the right processes, and build complementary human skills like judgment and discernment, ethical oversight, interpersonal engagement, and creative problem solving.**

In this paper, we will share what our latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey and Experis CIO Outlook research tells us about how employers are using AI and what they expect from their employees. We will then provide specific guidance for how the individual can futureproof their careers in the age of generative and agentic AI and even overdeliver on their leadership's AI-related goals.

AI Adoption Progress: Individuals and Organizations



While there has been substantial hype around the use of AI in the workplace, it's critical for employees to understand the reality. The workers who can meet employers where they are and then suggest techniques to take AI usage to the next level will be the most marketable and valuable to today's organizations.

The talent acquisition function has some of the most mature implementations of AI-based technologies. Our research indicates that over half of employers (53%) are currently leveraging AI tools in hiring and onboarding talent. Notably, South and Central American firms outpace the rest of the world in early AI adoption for hiring, training, and onboarding.¹

Employer Acceptance of AI Use by Candidates

Learning more about a company

33%

Interview preparation

32%

Searching for jobs

31%

Cover letter/resume personalization

28%

Hiring test problem solving

26%

Answering interview questions

24%

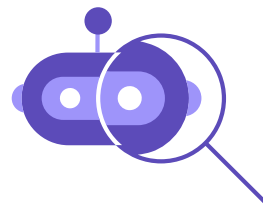
Enhancing portfolios

23%

Unacceptable during hiring process

15%

85%
of employers
think it's
acceptable for
candidates to use
AI during their job
search process



¹ [ManpowerGroup Q2 2025 Employment Outlook Survey](#)

81% *of CIOs and senior tech leaders are still exploring and scaling capabilities, offering valuable time for workers to refine their own skills.²*

Most employers (85%) also think it's also acceptable for candidates to use AI during the hiring process. Specific examples our employer respondents cited included searching for information generally (62%), learning about a company (33%) and preparing for interviews (32%). Organizations in the energy and technology sectors are more open to candidates using AI.¹

It's worth considering an employer's level of technology sophistication when applying, as our research also found that employers which have rejected or not considered AI adoption in hiring are less open to candidates using AI themselves.

Globally, AI adoption challenges within the workplace and in other organizational operations have barely changed since 2024, with high investment cost still being the top barrier (34%). As enthusiastic as they are about the prospect of AI, employers are realistic about its current capabilities.

Experis 2025 CIO Outlook research illustrated tech leaders are aware of AI's limitations: 36% of those respondents said AI is a game changer that requires more refinement, while 33% said the impact of these technologies on the business is still unclear. However, the good news for candidates is that it is not too late. Only 10% of CIOs and senior tech leaders say AI is fully integrated across their organization.²

At the same, approximately one-third of employers said that AI cannot replace or augment human skills such as ethical judgment or personalized customer service. In areas where employers feel AI can make tangible contributions now, human skills gaps exist. For instance, 33% of companies in the Asia Pacific region named workers' lack of AI skills as the greatest adoption barrier.¹

Employers Identify Skills That AI Can't Replace¹



Ethical judgment

33%

Customer service

31%

Team management

30%

Communication

27%

Strategic thinking

27%

Problem solving

26%

Technical expertise

26%

Sales skills

25%

Teaching and training

24%

Ideation and creativity

23%

Project management

21%

¹ [ManpowerGroup Q2 2025 Employment Outlook Survey](#) ² [Experis 2025 CIO Outlook Survey](#)

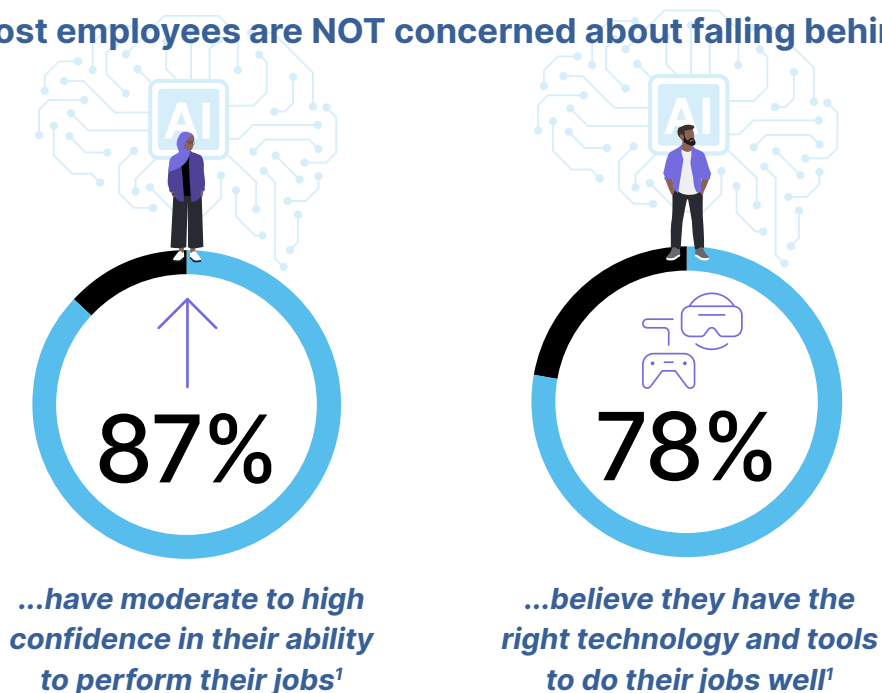
Employees are a bit more certain of some skills. ManpowerGroup's 2024 Talent Barometer research³ found that 87% of employees have moderate to high confidence in their ability to perform their jobs, and 78% believe they have the right technology and tools to do their jobs effectively.

However, there are some growing worker concerns about AI skills gaps. **According to new SAP Success Factors research, for instance, employees with low AI literacy levels expressed far more negative views toward AI in the workplace. These respondents were six times more likely to feel apprehensive and seven times more likely to feel afraid of using AI at work.** They were also eight times more likely to feel distressed about using AI when compared to more AI-savvy employees surveyed.⁴

Perhaps because this skillset is still relatively uncommon, the SAP research uncovered that managers look more favorably upon employees who demonstrate AI literacy. For example, when asked whether AI should influence performance reviews, many managers believed that employees who use AI should receive better performance reviews than non-users.

Meanwhile, the concern that AI and automation will result in mass human layoffs remains largely unfounded. Our recent global employment outlook surveys still show net positive hiring demand across industries. These findings present a major opportunity for employees to reconfigure their own roles to work more efficiently work with AI, which leads us to the next section on how to proceed with your own AI-related education and experimentation.

Most employees are NOT concerned about falling behind:



¹ ManpowerGroup Q2 2025 Employment Outlook Survey ³ ManpowerGroup 2024 Global Talent Barometer Survey

⁴ 2025 HR Trends Report, SAP Success Factors

Best Practices for Employees and Employers



How Employees Can Take Charge of AI Upskilling

All employees working today must be on a path to role redesign, which involves examining how the right AI skills can help them meet and even exceed a job's current expectations and developing adjacent human skills that are unlikely to be automated or programmed away – at least in the near term. Fortunately, there are a variety of strategies for adding AI skills to your personal arsenal.

Understand the need for career durability



According to ManpowerGroup futurist, Alexandra Levit, career durability refers to the ability to remain gainfully employed despite external disruptions, including technological advancements. **Career durability has five pillars: hard skills, soft skills, institutional knowledge, applied technology skills, and a growth mindset.** The acquisition of AI proficiency is an example of an applied technology skill. You don't necessarily have to know exactly how algorithms work, but you DO have to know that you can use available AI-based technologies to do your job more effectively.

Learn the types of AI being used in your workplace



As the title suggests, generative AI programs such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot focus on creating new content based on previous, human-developed assets with similar patterns and characteristics. A newer offshoot of generative AI is agentic AI, which goes a step further to empower an AI-based system to act autonomously and make decisions in collaboration with other AI-based systems. **To find out what your organization is deploying and how, get to know your IT representatives and ask for a chat or a brainstorm.** If your IT or innovation group is building a home-grown AI application, perhaps ask if your group can help to test it.

Research AI use cases for your role



Depending on your function, other organizations may already be using AI to improve business outcomes. For example, in the human resources function, an AI-based technology called talent intelligence relies on deep learning and advanced analytics to gain visibility into the skills of a company's workforce and the hiring and training required to keep pace with industry developments. You might hear about relevant implementations at conferences and in conversations with your peers, or simply by reading articles or searching online.

Sign up for relevant training



Most organizations are at the point of hosting at least informal training on AI literacy. But whether your company is doing this or not, **you can take advantage of free online offerings from Google, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, and DeepLearning.AI** – among many others. You'll have the opportunity to master cutting edge skills like prompt engineering and working with and training large language models (LLM). Most intro-level courses are written for general audience using consumer-friendly language and examples, so don't despair if you lack a technology foundation.

Gain buy-in for a small pilot



Once you understand the AI-based implementations that are possible for your role or group, and you've at least drafted a

path to execution for one of them, it's time to take the idea to your manager. **In presenting the idea, be as clear and detailed as you can regarding business justification, resource allocation, and projected benefits.** Your goal should be a "fail fast" scenario in which a limited scale pilot can be tweaked or redirected in real time.

Measure and promote your results




Before you begin your pilot, your team should gain consensus on what success looks like. If the goal is for your AI-based implementation to grow beyond a pilot, then you must know, right out of the gate, how you'll achieve a return on investment (ROI) for the business. Examples of the ROI on effective AI implementations include revenue growth, cost reduction, and customer satisfaction. So, you'll want to track these against the pre-AI status quo for the duration of your project, and then get your communications colleagues involved in showcasing stellar results via relevant internal and external channels.

Don't forget to build your human skills



As we've discussed, this is a period in which every worker must look at their role with a critical eye, assess the job responsibilities most vulnerable to being usurped by AI, and make a plan for ongoing human value creation. **Competitive skills, such as creativity and problem-solving, give humans unique advantages over AI.** Cooperative skills, like ethical oversight and clear communication, improve collaboration between humans and AI.



Experis Academy has collaborated with Microsoft since 2017 to identify skills gaps in the market and aims to introduce new professionals to the tech industry through various skilling programs. The Microsoft partnership aims to fuel organizations with skilled professionals to enable growth.

Experis Academy offers tech talent training programs that provide practical experience in in-demand tech stacks such as Azure and Copilot Studio.

Through our partnership with Microsoft and other global tech leaders, we deliver comprehensive programs covering the full range of AI platforms. These programs include training for roles such as cloud engineers, developers, data analysts, data scientists, functional and technical consultants, and more.

All training is based on best-in-class tech platforms and most offer independent industry-recognized certification for participating candidates.

Key Considerations for Employers

If you're an employer determining the best way to integrate AI-based technologies into your operations and want to support your employees in developing the right skills to assist, here are a few guidelines to consider.

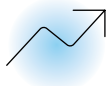


Consider augmentation over automation. AI tends to augment human work more often than it fully automates it. A recent Anthropic study showed that many cognitively oriented tasks turn out to be substantially more complex than they initially appear, requiring broader contextualization that AI has not fully mastered. This complexity preserves significant portions of most jobs.

Even advanced AI has blind spots related to common sense reasoning, domain-specific knowledge, and dynamic problem-solving in uncertain environments. These limitations reinforce the idea that humans remain indispensable in roles requiring subtle judgment or emotional interaction.



Develop and test models with a trusted partner. If you already have HR technology systems in place, chances are they are at least experimenting – if not actively selling – AI components to their solution. So, instead of starting from scratch, talk to your existing vendors about how you can leverage AI to optimize your workforce operations. Try one functional area at a time and be willing to see new implementations as works in progress that require continuous testing and refinement.



Put ongoing upskilling initiatives in place. The routine use of AI-based technologies is creating tremendous demand for the requisite skills allowing human workers to design, manage, collaborate with, fix, redeploy, and explain the innerworkings of AI components. However, most employees today don't have these skills yet, and employers who want to actively boost tool usage and productivity must provide the right AI literacy training themselves. Well-designed training programs integrating real-world practice using AI tools can significantly shorten skill acquisition time.




Always incorporate human oversight into AI-driven processes. As Learning and Anthropic pointed out, while AI may handle data analysis or initial drafting, humans are always needed to provide context, ethical judgment, and emotional intelligence. Most organizations especially require human translators, who can immediately align AI capabilities with business goals. Many, if not a majority of roles should be redesigned to maximize human-AI collaboration, with AI tackling routine and repeatable tasks and employees concentrating on the more nuanced activities at which humans excel.



Master internal integration before external commercialization. Naturally, most leaders are excited by the prospect of integrating AI into their products and services. However, it's wise to walk before you run and take the time to deploy AI internally first. Once a few AI implementations have increased operational efficiency enterprise-wide, you'll be in a better position to engender trust with customers and other stakeholders and will be less likely to make mistakes that could result in reputational fallout.

Whether we're incorporating AI-based technologies into an everyday task or a complex enterprise process, flexibility, curiosity, and a positive attitude are essential. As long as humans remain the true masters of our own knowledge domains and strive to keep our skillsets current and applicable, we have little to fear. For those who take the right steps to prepare and pivot, building and sustaining a meaningful career in the age of AI is not only doable, but exciting and full of opportunity.

“For a growing number of our clients, Sophie is a game changer. Combining the strengths of multiple large language models with the power of our proprietary workforce data are critical to help them navigate this period of rapid change.” – Max Leaming, Head of Data Science and AI Solutions, ManpowerGroup



Sophie
Leveraging AI to
Improve Strategic
Workforce Planning

Sophie AI is our ever-evolving, constantly upgrading AI ecosystem – and your ally in reshaping the workforce. Sophie AI technology enhances and accelerates all our products, services and solutions, so our people can deliver faster, better and smarter for you.

Sophie AI also empowers you with next-gen tools across the workforce lifecycle. **Built with industry-leading data and the world-class labor market expertise of ManpowerGroup, Sophie AI gives you the power, tools and insights to deliver immediate value and outpace the competition.**

Leveraging insights from more than 22 billion data points with the power of our global team of workforce experts, the Sophie AI platform helps a growing number of clients in diverse industries (e.g., tech, defense, and professional services) improve their strategic workforce planning process.



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