

STRATEGIC WORKFORCE REPORT

Business Transformation in the Era of AI and Technology

The future of jobs, the entry level paradox, and how organizations must rebuild the leadership pipeline

PREPARED FOR PeopleWise Partners

GEOGRAPHIC LENS Global evidence with implications for Jordan and the GCC

TIME HORIZON 2026–2035

PUBLISHED 3 September 2026

Report at a glance

AI will change the design of most jobs before it eliminates whole occupations. The immediate strategic risk is a narrower first job gateway and therefore a weaker future leadership pipeline.



Sources: World Economic Forum (2025); Stanford Digital Economy Lab (2026); Brynjolfsson, Li and Raymond (2025). Figures are not directly comparable and should be read with the limitations described in this report.

Scope and assumptions

This report examines how artificial intelligence (AI), generative AI, automation, robotics, and digital platforms are changing business models and work. It distinguishes occupational *exposure* from observed job loss, and employer forecasts from measured outcomes. “Entry level” refers primarily to early career professional, clerical, technical, and service roles through which workers acquire workplace judgment and become candidates for future management. The report does not assume that current AI capabilities will remain fixed or that adoption will proceed at the same speed in every sector or country.

Executive answer

AI is unlikely to make work disappear on a global scale in the next decade. It is much more likely to reorganize work unevenly. Routine, codified, screen based tasks are being automated first, while jobs that combine accountability, tacit knowledge, physical presence, complex relationships, and judgment are more likely to be augmented. The World Economic Forum’s 2025 employer survey estimated that structural labour market transformation could affect 22% of today’s jobs by 2030, with 170 million roles created and 92 million displaced, for a net gain of 78 million. These are employer expectations, not a guaranteed forecast. [World Economic Forum, *Future of Jobs Report 2025*](#)

The most important near term risk is not mass unemployment but a narrowing doorway into professional work. In August 2026, a Stanford Digital Economy Lab study using payroll records for 3.5 5 million US workers per month found no economy wide AI job displacement. However, employment among workers aged 22 25 in the most AI exposed occupations was 19% below the level it would have reached had it kept pace with less exposed occupations. The divergence operated mainly through reduced hiring, not increased separations. The authors explicitly describe the result as an early descriptive indicator rather than a causal estimate, and note sample and pre trend limitations.

[Brynjolfsson, Chandar and Chen, *Canaries in the Coal Mine?*, revised August 2026](#)

That creates an **entry level paradox**: AI can make a junior employee productive sooner, yet the same productivity gain can persuade a company that it needs fewer junior employees. If organizations remove the bottom of the career ladder, they also remove the practice, feedback, exposure, and observation from which future experts and leaders are developed.

The strategic answer is therefore not to preserve obsolete work or ban AI. It is to replace the traditional entry level job with an **AI enabled apprenticeship role**. Junior employees should use AI, but within a deliberate learning architecture that includes unassisted practice, supervised judgment, customer and operational exposure, rotations, progressive decision rights, and measurable skill gates. The winning organization will automate tasks while continuing to manufacture talent.

1. What is actually changing

1.1 Jobs are bundles of tasks

AI generally acts first on tasks rather than entire occupations. A finance analyst may automate data collection, first draft commentary, and formatting while retaining responsibility for assumptions, business context, challenge, stakeholder communication, and sign off. A recruiter may automate sourcing support, scheduling, and document preparation while remaining accountable for role definition, candidate assessment, fairness, persuasion, and hiring judgment.

This distinction matters because “exposure” is often misreported as “replacement.” The ILO’s refined 2025 global index found that about one in four jobs has some generative AI exposure, but only 3.3% of global employment falls into its highest exposure category. Clerical roles remain the most exposed, while the ILO concludes that job transformation is more likely than full occupational elimination because most jobs still contain tasks requiring human input. Exposure is also unequal: women account for 4.7% of employment in the highest exposure category versus 2.4% for men, reflecting occupational concentration. [ILO and NASK, *Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure*, 2025](#)

The IMF uses a broader method and estimates that nearly 40% of global employment is exposed to AI, rising to around 60% in advanced economies, compared with 40% in emerging markets and 26% in low income countries. Exposure includes both substitution risk and opportunities for productivity enhancing complementarity. [IMF, *AI Will Transform the Global Economy*, 2024](#)

1.2 Adoption is rapid, but deep transformation is still limited

The best current firm evidence does not support claims that AI has already produced widespread headcount collapse. UK official statistics show that the share of businesses with at least 10 employees reporting use of one or more AI technologies rose from about 12% in late 2023 to about 35% in June 2026. Yet adoption remained shallow: only 10% of AI using businesses described their use as extensive, and most reported no change in total headcount. Around 6% of businesses using AI to improve operations reported a headcount decrease. [UK Office for National Statistics, *Artificial Intelligence in UK Businesses: 2023 to 2026*](#)

Transformation is also a management challenge, not simply a technology purchase. Earlier ONS evidence found that firms with stronger management practices were more likely to adopt advanced technologies and to follow through on AI plans. The most common reported barriers were difficulty identifying use cases, cost, and lack of expertise. The association between technology adoption and productivity was positive, but the study cautions that cross sectional results do not establish causality. [UK Office for National Statistics, *Management Practices and the Adoption of Technology and AI*, 2025](#)

2. Which jobs are most likely to contract?

No responsible forecast can identify a definitive list of jobs that will be “gone.” The more defensible conclusion is that some **stand alone job designs** will contract sharply because their core tasks are routine, codified, digital, and easy to verify.

Highest contraction pressure through 2030

Job family	Roles and tasks under greatest pressure	Likely outcome
Clerical and data processing	Data entry, typing, transcription, record updating, document classification, standard form completion	Large headcount decline; residual work moves to exception handling, quality assurance, and data governance
Administrative support	Basic scheduling, travel coordination, meeting notes, inbox triage, standard correspondence, document formatting	Fewer pure support roles; broader business coordinator roles with stakeholder and project responsibilities
Transactional finance	Basic bookkeeping, invoice coding, routine reconciliations, payroll processing, standard management report preparation	Automation of processing; growth in controls, analysis, system ownership, tax, compliance, and advisory work
Front line transactional service	Tier 1 FAQs, scripted call centre work, basic ticket handling, simple claims intake	AI self service handles standard demand; humans manage complex, emotional, regulated, or high value cases
Retail and branch transactions	Cashiers, ticket clerks, bank tellers, postal counter work	Continued decline where digital payments, self service, and platform adoption are feasible
Routine digital production	First drafts of generic content, simple translation, basic image adaptation, boilerplate code, standard test generation	Output per worker rises; fewer roles based only on production, more emphasis on originality, verification, product judgment, and client context
Predictable physical processing	Repetitive inspection, sorting, picking, and assembly in controlled environments	Gradual automation where robotics economics work; slower change in variable or safety critical environments

Assessment synthesizes WEF job forecasts, ILO exposure evidence, firm adoption data, and task level analysis. Outcomes vary by sector, country, regulation, and implementation.

This direction is consistent with the WEF employer survey, which identifies cashiers and ticket clerks, administrative assistants and executive secretaries, postal service clerks, bank tellers, and data entry clerks among the roles expected to decline fastest or in the largest absolute numbers by 2030. [World Economic Forum, 2025](#)

Roles that will change but not disappear

Accountants, auditors, financial analysts, lawyers, engineers, recruiters, marketers, software developers, doctors, teachers, and managers are highly exposed to AI because much of their work is digitized. Exposure does not mean elimination. These occupations combine technical production with responsibility, ambiguity, institutional context, human trust, and consequences for error. AI will remove or accelerate parts of the work and raise the performance standard for the remainder.

The likely result is a **barbell** inside many professions: fewer roles devoted mainly to routine production; strong demand for high trust experts and relationship intensive practitioners; and a redesigned entry layer that combines AI fluency with supervised real world experience.

3. Where jobs are likely to grow

The biggest job gains will not be limited to AI engineering. The WEF expects fast percentage growth in big data, fintech, AI/machine learning, software, cybersecurity, renewable energy, and environmental roles. In absolute volume, it expects substantial growth in frontline, care, construction, delivery, sales, and education roles. Demographic change and the green transition matter alongside AI. [World Economic Forum, 2025](#)

Five growth zones are especially relevant:

1. **Technology creation and infrastructure:** AI engineering, data engineering, cybersecurity, cloud/platform operations, robotics, and digital product management.
2. **AI assurance and governance:** model risk, AI audit, privacy, cybersecurity, data stewardship, compliance, human rights review, content provenance, and quality assurance.
3. **Human intensive services:** care, counselling, education, coaching, complex customer service, relationship management, negotiation, and enterprise sales.
4. **Physical and place based work:** construction, infrastructure, maintenance, logistics, energy, advanced manufacturing, and skilled trades.
5. **Transformation roles:** process architects, change managers, workflow/product owners, learning designers, workforce planners, and sector specialists who can connect technology with operating reality.

These categories will overlap. The fastest growing professional will often be a domain expert who can use and govern AI, not a pure technologist.

4. The future of entry level work

4.1 Why entry level roles are unusually exposed

Traditional junior roles often consist of codified work: gathering information, preparing first drafts, following standard procedures, producing basic analysis, documenting meetings, and escalating exceptions. These tasks are attractive automation targets because they are digital, repeatable, and relatively easy to check. Senior work is more likely to depend on tacit knowledge, accountability, political awareness, client trust, and judgment built through experience.

The revised 2026 Stanford paper offers the strongest current warning signal. In its US payroll panel, workers aged 22-25 in highly exposed occupations experienced a widening employment shortfall relative to less exposed peers, while experienced workers showed no comparable gap. The authors suggest that AI may substitute for codified knowledge while complementing experience based knowledge, but they do not claim causality or predict that the trend will continue indefinitely. [Brynjolfsson, Chandar and Chen, 2026](#)

The IMF's 2026 analysis of millions of job vacancies also finds that entry level jobs have relatively high AI exposure. It reports that one in ten vacancies in advanced economies and one in twenty in emerging economies now requests at least one new skill. Areas with greater demand for AI skills have seen

weaker employment in highly exposed, low complementarity occupations, although the relationship varies by country and occupation. [IMF, *Bridging Skill Gaps for the Future*, 2026](#)

4.2 AI can strengthen junior workers

The opposite force is equally important. In a field study of more than 5,000 customer support agents, an AI assistant increased productivity by about 15% on average, with the largest benefits for less experienced and lower skilled workers. Evidence suggested that AI helped diffuse the practices of stronger workers and supported learning. [Brynjolfsson, Li and Raymond, *Generative AI at Work*, QJE 2025](#)

A controlled experiment involving 453 college educated professionals found that access to ChatGPT reduced time spent on selected writing tasks by 40% and improved output quality by 18%. The study covered bounded writing tasks, so the result should not be generalized to whole occupations. [Noy and Zhang, *Science*, 2023](#)

These findings imply that a junior employee with AI can reach acceptable output quality earlier, communicate more effectively, and handle a wider range of tasks. The entry level role should therefore become more ambitious, not disappear.

4.3 Performance is not the same as learning

AI can improve immediate output while weakening independent capability if the worker becomes an answer consumer. A 2025 randomized trial in high school mathematics illustrates the mechanism: students using a standard GPT 4 interface performed much better during assisted practice but 17% worse than the control group on an unassisted exam. A safeguarded tutor designed to guide rather than give answers largely removed the negative effect. This is education evidence, not a workplace estimate, but it demonstrates why AI deployment must protect learning by doing. [Bastani et al., *PNAS*, 2025](#)

Similarly, a CHI 2025 survey of 319 knowledge workers covering 936 real world AI use cases found self reported reductions in critical thinking effort when users had greater confidence in AI outputs. Because the study is based on perceptions rather than experimental measurement, it should be read as a design warning rather than proof of cognitive decline. [Lee et al., *The Impact of Generative AI on Critical Thinking*, 2025](#)

5. The leadership pipeline problem

Future leaders do not emerge from leadership courses alone. They develop by handling progressively harder work, observing consequences, receiving feedback, building credibility, and learning how the organization really operates. If entry level work disappears without a replacement learning architecture, six failures follow:

6. **Experience starvation:** employees reach mid career with polished outputs but too few real decisions, customer interactions, failures, and recovery experiences.
7. **A judgment deficit:** AI supplies answers before the employee has built the domain knowledge needed to challenge them.
8. **A smaller succession pool:** fewer junior hires today mean fewer credible managers and specialists five to ten years later.

9. **A diversity reversal:** when formal entry routes narrow, advancement depends more heavily on networks, prior privilege, and access to elite experience.
10. **Senior talent overdependence:** experienced staff become highly leveraged but overloaded; the organization becomes vulnerable to retirement, resignation, and poaching.
11. **Institutional knowledge loss:** firms automate visible tasks without transferring the contextual knowledge that explains why processes and controls exist.

This is a strategic risk created by organizational choices, not an unavoidable property of AI.

6. The new model: AI enabled apprenticeship

The governing principle is simple: **automate low value activity, but preserve high value learning.**

Design principles

12. **Maintain a strategic junior hiring floor.** Workforce plans should define the minimum cohort required to sustain future specialist and leadership pipelines, even when short term productivity models suggest fewer hires.
13. **Unbundle tasks before removing roles.** Classify work into automate, augment, apprentice, and human accountability categories. Never automate a learning critical task merely because it is technically possible.
14. **Use progressive autonomy.** Junior employees first observe and attempt; then use AI with review; then challenge AI outputs; finally own decisions within controlled limits.
15. **Require both assisted and unassisted competence.** Employees should demonstrate that they can explain assumptions, detect errors, and perform essential tasks without AI when risk, system failure, or regulation requires it.
16. **Move juniors closer to reality.** Replace hours of formatting and data gathering with customer interviews, site visits, operations exposure, cross functional projects, exception handling, and after action reviews.
17. **Make managers accountable for talent production.** Manager KPIs should include coaching quality, skill progression, internal mobility, and successor readiness, not only short term output.
18. **Build safe AI tutors, not answer machines.** Internal tools should ask for reasoning, reveal sources, present counterarguments, provide hints, and require user verification.
19. **Document institutional judgment.** Capture decision rationales, exceptions, lessons, and expert commentary in governed knowledge systems so AI and employees learn from the organization's real context.
20. **Use rotations and team based delivery.** Short rotations through operations, customers, finance, risk, and technology develop systems thinking more quickly than a narrow junior role.
21. **Protect inclusion.** Audit who receives stretch assignments, human mentoring, client exposure, and promotion opportunities; access to developmental work must not become a privilege for a small group.

Illustrative 24 month associate journey

Stage	Human development objective	Appropriate AI use	Evidence required to progress
Months 0 3: Foundations	Understand the business, standards, data, controls, and customer	Guided search, explanation, drafting, simulations	Unassisted knowledge checks; source verification; supervised work samples
Months 4 9: Supported delivery	Produce reliable work and recognize exceptions	AI assisted analysis and drafting with mandatory review notes	Accuracy, correction rate, reasoning quality, stakeholder feedback
Months 10 15: Judgment	Compare options, challenge assumptions, and manage small risks	Scenario generation, red teaming, alternative analysis	Decision memos, oral defence, controlled decision rights
Months 16 24: Ownership	Lead a small project and coordinate others	Workflow orchestration with human accountability	Business outcome, lessons learned, peer/client feedback, readiness panel

Illustrative progression model; organizations should adapt timeframes and skill gates to role risk and complexity.

The percentages of assisted and unassisted work should vary by risk and profession. A useful starting design – not an empirical rule – is to reserve a meaningful share of junior assignments for independent reasoning, a larger share for supervised AI augmented delivery, and the remainder for field, client, team, and rotation experience.

Board and executive scorecard

Useful measures include entry hires per 100 knowledge workers, time to independently verified competence, the gap between AI assisted and unassisted assessment, manager coaching hours, access to client or operational exposure, internal promotion rates, diversity at each pipeline stage, regretted loss of early career talent, critical role successor coverage, and the proportion of automation savings reinvested in skills and innovation.

8. Implications for education and public policy

Education cannot prepare students for one static occupation. It should develop domain foundations, communication, quantitative reasoning, digital and AI literacy, ethics, teamwork, creativity, and the ability to learn continuously. Assessment must test both AI enabled performance and independent competence.

Governments and sector bodies should:

22. Co fund high quality apprenticeships and first job programmes in exposed professional fields.
23. Provide incentives for employers that deliver verified training, rotations, and durable employment outcomes rather than short internships.
24. Build real time labour market intelligence around tasks and skills, not only job titles.
25. Expand portable micro credentials and skill passports based on observed work.
26. Strengthen transition support for clerical workers, women, and young people in exposed sectors.

27. Ensure public procurement and AI transformation contracts include local capability building and graduate development requirements.
28. Apply human review, transparency, privacy, and bias controls to AI used in hiring, performance management, and access to work.

9. Jordan and GCC implications

Jordan

Jordan enters the AI transition with a difficult labour market baseline. The World Bank reports unemployment of 21.4% in the third quarter of 2025, female unemployment of 33.9%, and female labour force participation of 14.4%. Its country programme prioritizes more and better private sector jobs, human capital, and digitalization. [World Bank, *Jordan Overview*, updated 2026](#)

This makes the loss of entry routes especially costly. Jordan should avoid competing mainly in easily automated, low value digital outsourcing. Its opportunity is to move toward bilingual, domain rich, AI enabled services: finance operations and analysis, HR and recruitment advisory, compliance, engineering support, health and education services, tourism operations, digital public services, cybersecurity, Arabic content and data quality, and regional project coordination.

Priority actions include a national first job guarantee or wage supported apprenticeship for selected sectors; shared AI training and governance services for SMEs; university employer studios built around real projects; and a Jordan GCC talent bridge that allows early career professionals to work on supervised regional assignments.

GCC

GCC economies have the capital and policy ambition to adopt AI quickly, but they also have national workforce development and localization objectives. Saudi Arabia's National Strategy for Data and AI targets more than 20,000 data and AI specialists, approximately SAR 75 billion in investment, and more than 300 AI startups. [Saudi Data and AI Authority, *National Strategy for Data and AI*](#)

The regional risk is a two tier labour market: highly paid senior specialists and AI systems at the top, with too few graduate routes underneath. Large employers and governments should require AI transformation programmes to include graduate cohorts, sector academies, rotations, and knowledge transfer. Banking, energy, infrastructure, healthcare, government, tourism, and logistics can develop AI enabled professional apprenticeships tied to nationalization goals. Arabic language capability, local data stewardship, responsible AI, cyber resilience, and sector regulation are durable regional advantages.

Jordan and the GCC can be complementary: the GCC provides scale, investment, and complex transformation programmes; Jordan provides a well educated bilingual talent base and cost effective professional services. A regional apprenticeship and credentialing system could turn that complementarity into a stronger leadership pipeline for both.

10. Three scenarios to 2035

Scenario A: Augmentation led transformation most plausible

AI becomes embedded in most knowledge workflows. Total employment does not collapse, but routine professional and clerical hiring contracts. Entry cohorts are smaller and more productive. Firms that redesign learning sustain their pipelines; firms that do not face mid career skill shortages later.

Scenario B: Cost cutting automation high organizational risk

Companies treat AI mainly as a headcount tool. Junior hiring falls sharply, seniors supervise more systems and fewer people, and short term margins improve. By the early 2030s, succession weakness, fragile controls, limited innovation, and expensive external hiring offset part of the savings.

Scenario C: Inclusive talent acceleration best outcome

Employers, educators, and governments use AI to widen access to coaching, raise novice productivity, and create structured apprenticeships. Routine work declines, but entry routes shift toward higher value assignments. Productivity, internal mobility, and leadership diversity improve together.

These scenarios are not forecasts. They show how organizational and policy choices mediate the effect of technology.

THE DESIGN RULE

Automate tasks, not the pathway to mastery. Every removed junior task needs an explicit replacement learning experience.

Conclusion

The defining workforce question of the AI era is not, “How many jobs can we remove?” It is, “How do we raise productivity while continuing to create capability, judgment, and leaders?”

Some roles built almost entirely on routine processing will decline sharply. Most occupations will be redesigned rather than erased. The entry level layer is at genuine risk because its traditional tasks overlap strongly with AI capabilities, and early US evidence already points to reduced hiring in exposed occupations. At the same time, the best field evidence shows that AI can disproportionately improve the performance of novice workers.

The resolution is deliberate design. Organizations must preserve the learning value once hidden inside junior work and rebuild it through AI enabled apprenticeships, progressive responsibility, human coaching, real world exposure, and verified competence. AI should remove drudgery without removing the path to mastery.

Limitations and disagreements

Evidence on AI and employment is evolving quickly. Exposure indices measure technical overlap, not realized displacement. WEF figures are employer expectations. The Stanford 19% figure is a descriptive relative shortfall in a US payroll panel, not a causal global estimate; its sample overrepresents larger firms and highly exposed occupations, and some divergence predates generative AI. UK business data show rapid adoption but still shallow use and should not be generalized mechanically to Jordan or the GCC. Productivity experiments examine bounded tasks or occupations and do not prove that gains persist across whole organizations. Evidence on learning loss comes partly from education and self-reported workplace behaviour, so the application to leadership development is a reasoned inference that should be tested through employer data.

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