

AI IS CHANGING JOBS, SKILLS BECOME THE DIFFERENTIATOR

Upskilling and redeployment emerge as key challenges in the evolving job market

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One lakh seventy-five thousand (1,75,000). Wondering what this figure is all about? Well, this is the number of technology workers who have lost their jobs globally in 2026 so far. And we still have four months before we enter 2027. Do you know how many tech workers lost their jobs in 2025? 245,000.

Of course, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the primary reasons behind these job cuts. But beyond AI adoption and automation, companies are also restructuring and cutting costs. From Apple, Oracle, Microsoft, Uber and Amazon to Google, Salesforce, LinkedIn, Meta, Cisco and PayPal, the job cuts have not only affected the technology sector but have also impacted real estate, manufacturing, retail, recruitment, crypto, aerospace and transportation. But let's understand the larger picture. There is little point in lamenting any further about how and why AI is reshaping jobs across industries. The reality is that AI is transforming recruitment and shifting demand away from routine jobs towards specialised skills.

AI literacy is no longer optional if you want to stay afloat in the job market. And that does not simply mean knowing how to write prompts on ChatGPT or Claude. You must know how to explore AI-generated data, spot patterns and draw actionable conclusions. Knowing how to integrate AI tools is equally important, connecting



multiple AI platforms and systems to create seamless workflows that can solve complex problems. "AI literacy will become a foundational skill across almost every profession. There will always be specialist roles involving machine learning, data science and AI engineering. But for the broader workforce, the ability to effectively use generative AI tools will increasingly become a mainstream workplace skill, much like using spreadsheets or presentation software today," said Kartik Narayan, CEO, Apna.

According to Swapnil Sahoo, Great Lakes Institute of Manage-

ment, Gurgaon, the most valuable young professional will be someone who can use AI to complete the first 60-70% of a task quickly, but then knows how to question the output. "India had an estimated 600,000-650,000 AI professionals in 2024, but NASSCOM estimates that the country will require more than 1.25 million by 2027. Don't become only a 'prompt engineer.' Become an AI-enabled finance professional, marketer, strategist, product manager, engineer, researcher or entrepreneur. Technology plus domain expertise is much more defensible than technology alone," he said.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates has warned that AI could lead to massive unemployment. But Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang has argued that the technology will also create a huge number of new jobs. "Everybody's job changes. Some jobs will be eliminated. Many new jobs will be created," he said.

In a report, Boston Consulting

Group said that over the next two to three years, 50% to 55% of jobs in the USA will be reshaped by AI. It also mentioned that while job augmentation and new job creation will happen rapidly, the full substitution of jobs by AI will be slower. The report said the key challenge in the AI era will not simply be the number of jobs affected, but how quickly workers can be upskilled and redeployed into redesigned roles. "In 2026, companies have moved or are moving away from degree-centric hiring to competency-based models. Graduates must demonstrate applied skills, adaptability, and agility. Companies want talent that can navigate AI-driven workflows, collaborate across borders, and deliver measurable outcomes. India will remain a strong growth hub, especially in technology, green energy, and advanced manufacturing, but hiring will be selective. The differentiator will be wider exposure—graduates who have experienced exchange programmes, interdisciplinary learning modules, and cross-cultural projects will stand out in a market that values diversity and global mindset," said Vishal Khurma of Woxsen University, Hyderabad.

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