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KPMG survey finds CEOs plan AI-driven hiring as data shows skill gaps

Executive Summary

New data show a complex picture of AI's impact on work. In the US, a majority of CEOs now plan to hire more people as artificial intelligence creates business opportunities (www.axios.com [1]). Yet global surveys suggest AI adoption has already led to a small net decline in jobs (www.spglobal.com [2]). Meanwhile, 60% of employees worldwide worry that AI is eroding their skills (newsroom.ibm.com [3]), highlighting the need for companies to redesign roles and upskill their workforce in order to realise AI's benefits.

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KPMG: CEOs see AI as a job creator

A new KPMG survey of 400 chief executives in the United States reveals that many leaders view AI as a net creator of jobs, not just a cost-cutting tool. The survey, conducted from August to late September, found that **89% of US CEOs expect to increase their company's headcount over the next three years as artificial intelligence creates new business opportunities** (www.axios.com [1]). This marks a notable shift in tone from earlier anxieties about AI-driven automation eliminating roles. Instead of shrinking their workforces, the vast majority of these CEOs anticipate *hiring more employees* to capitalise on AI-fuelled growth.

Beyond hiring plans, the same KPMG poll indicates that companies are actively reshaping work to integrate AI. **About 86% of the surveyed CEOs said they are already redefining job roles, career paths and team structures to embrace human-AI collaboration** (www.axios.com [2]). And nearly 80% reported recruiting new talent with AI and technology skills to support these initiatives (www.axios.com [3]). For business leaders, this reflects a growing recognition that realising AI's potential often means reorganising work - identifying which tasks machines can do and elevating the human roles that remain. Rather than simply automating tasks to cut costs, forward-looking firms are planning for growth by redesigning roles and strategies around the strengths of both AI and their people. This positive outlook from top executives suggests that, with the right approach, AI may enhance productivity and create new avenues for business expansion that require additional human talent.

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Layoffs underscore AI’s mixed impact on jobs

Despite optimistic plans, not all organisations are experiencing immediate workforce growth from AI. On the contrary, this year has seen significant layoffs attributed to automation as companies recalibrate their operations. In the United States, **employers announced 87,714 job cuts tied to AI in the first five months of 2026 - exceeding the total attributed to AI for all of 2025** (www.cnbc.com [1]). A number of high-profile firms across technology, finance and retail have cited **artificial intelligence as a factor in staff reductions**, targeting roles rendered redundant by new software or process automation. Many of these workforce reductions have come through natural attrition and reduced entry-level hiring rather than mass firings, but they contribute to an overall slimmer pipeline of junior roles.

Looking at the broader picture, new research suggests the net effect of AI on employment has turned slightly negative. S&P Global’s latest analysis of companies worldwide found that **the share of firms cutting staff due to AI deployment has just exceeded the share expanding their workforce, yielding a net -5 percentage point impact on employment over the past year** (www.spglobal.com [2]). This represents a reversal from 2025, when AI’s impact on jobs was neutral to mildly positive (www.spglobal.com [3]). The findings underscore that without a clear plan to redeploy employees into new roles or higher-value work, efficiency gains from AI risk translating into headcount reduction. For executives, it’s a reminder that reaping AI’s benefits is not automatic - it requires actively managing workforce transitions so that productivity improvements lead to growth, not just cost cutting.

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Surveys flag urgent need for upskilling

Emerging evidence suggests that many organisations are unprepared for the workforce shifts caused by AI. In an **IBM Institute for Business Value** study spanning 1,500 HR executives and 8,800 employees worldwide, **60% of employees said they fear AI is eroding their skills** (newsroom.ibm.com [1]). This concern is highest around core “human” abilities like critical thinking and judgment, which workers feel are at risk of atrophy as more routine tasks are automated. At the same time, nearly half of organisations do not involve their chief human-resources officer when defining AI strategy, according to the IBM survey (newsroom.ibm.com [2]) - a disconnect that may leave employees without adequate guidance or training as their roles evolve.

This skills gap is borne out by productivity data. **Boston Consulting Group’s 2026 global survey found that 74% of frontline employees are now using AI at least weekly - a 23-point jump from the previous year** (www.bcg.com [3]). Among those regular users, **42% save around one full workday per week thanks to AI tools** (www.bcg.com [4]). However, the consultancy notes that most organisations have yet to adjust their workflows and job designs to capitalise on these time savings. Indeed, two-thirds of employees say that AI has taken over simpler tasks, leaving them with more complex work (www.bcg.com [5]), but many report they have *not* been trained or directed on how to use the freed-up time productively (www.bcg.com [6]) (www.bcg.com [7]). The result can be frustration or disengagement - what IBM’s study calls “invisible work” and an **erosion of employee confidence

in AI** when accountability and upskilling are lacking (newsroom.ibm.com [8]) (newsroom.ibm.com [9]).

For leaders, these findings emphasise that deploying AI is only the beginning; *workforce preparedness and process redesign are key* to unlocking value. Companies that clearly define which tasks are human-led, AI-assisted or fully automated report **tangible benefits - such as an 18% reduction in risk and 20% improvement in quality** (newsroom.ibm.com [10]). By contrast, organisations that fail to invest in training and role redesign risk a backlash from employees and miss out on the potential productivity gains. Ensuring workers have the necessary skills and clarity about new ways of working will determine whether AI becomes a source of sustainable growth or a trigger for talent loss and declining morale.

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Key Statistics

- 89% - Share of US CEOs planning to increase workforce due to AI (KPMG survey)
- 87,714 - Announced US job cuts tied to AI in Jan - May 2026 (Challenger, Gray & Christmas)
- 74% - Frontline employees using AI at least weekly (BCG global survey)
- 42% - Frontline AI users saving a full workday per week (BCG global survey)
- 60% - Employees who worry AI is eroding their skills (IBM global survey)

KEY TAKEAWAY

Ensure your AI strategy includes clear role redesign and robust upskilling. Without defined human-AI workflows and staff training, time saved by automation may go to waste - or even lead to more job cuts than productivity gains.

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