LUMO INSIGHTS

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Goldman Sachs: AI-driven layoffs have lasting impact on jobs

Executive Summary

A new Goldman Sachs analysis of early AI-driven layoffs shows that workers who lost jobs to automation are taking longer to find new roles, highlighting the human cost of rapid change. Meanwhile, a global PwC study finds that companies leading in AI adoption are adding jobs and raising pay faster than their peers. New data from Gartner also reveals many HR and IT leaders lack a shared vision on how AI will reshape work - a misalignment that could hinder the workforce transformations needed to capture AI's potential benefits.

Goldman Sachs: early AI layoffs leave lasting toll

Goldman Sachs has issued a stark warning about the human impact of recent AI-driven job cuts. An analysis by the bank indicates that the first wave of US workers laid off from jobs highly exposed to AI since 2025 are struggling to re-enter the workforce. These employees took about one month longer to find new jobs than other laid-off workers, and they were **10 percentage points** more likely to remain unemployed a year after losing their positions (finance.yahoo.com [1]). The bank notes that this pattern echoes the aftermath of past technological revolutions: workers displaced by new technologies tend to face prolonged joblessness and repeated disruptions in their careers (www.axios.com [2]).

For business leaders, the finding underscores the need to manage AI-related workforce changes carefully. While wholesale layoffs in the overall economy have not yet materialised, even targeted automation can have **"lasting" effects on displaced workers' livelihoods** (finance.yahoo.com [3]). Companies introducing AI should plan for transition support - such as retraining or internal mobility - for employees in at-risk roles. This can help reduce long-term unemployment risks and preserve valuable skills, rather than simply viewing AI as an opportunity for quick cost-cutting.

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PwC: AI leaders see jobs and wage growth

A comprehensive global analysis by PwC suggests that companies which embrace AI to augment their workforce are not eliminating jobs, but creating more value - and often more employment. Released in June, PwC's **2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer** examined data from nearly one billion job adverts across 27 regions to understand AI's impact on roles, skills and productivity (www.pwc.be [1]). It found that organisations on the forefront of AI adoption - the "most AI-exposed" companies -

expanded their workforces by **53%** since 2019, far outpacing the **36%** headcount growth at less AI-exposed peers (www.pwc.be [2]). These AI leaders also enjoyed higher wage growth (24% vs 17%) and significantly greater productivity gains - a group of “super-star” firms achieved a **163%** rise in labour productivity, vastly exceeding other businesses (www.pwc.be [3]). The data suggests that, rather than replacing workers at scale, leading organisations are using AI to **boost efficiency and amplify human performance** to drive growth (www.pwc.com [4]).

The research also highlights a diverging labour market for skills. Jobs requiring specific AI-related skills have grown almost **eight times** faster than overall employment - up **69%** since 2019, compared to just 9% growth in total jobs (www.pwc.be [5]). These AI-skilled roles command a growing wage premium of around 62% over the market average (www.pwc.be [6]). At the same time, entry-level positions are evolving: in AI-intensive fields they are now seven times more likely to demand what used to be senior-level skills (like judgment and leadership), and these advanced-entry roles grew 35% since 2019 while other entry-level jobs declined 10% (www.pwc.be [7]). This points to a “two-track” workforce trajectory in the AI era: one track of increasingly specialised, higher-paid roles that AI elevates, and another track where AI automates simpler tasks, potentially reducing traditional junior roles. The **upshot for leaders** is that successful AI adoption appears to go hand-in-hand with upskilling employees and redesigning jobs, rather than cutting headcount. Even on a macro level, the benefits can be unevenly distributed: new IMF analysis notes that while workers with AI skills are earning more, regions with a high concentration of AI-intensive jobs are not yet seeing overall job growth (www.imf.org [8]).

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Gartner: HR and IT out of sync on AI

Another recent finding underscores how internal strategy - not just technology - can make or break an AI transformation. According to a Gartner survey presented at its HR Symposium in London, only **38%** of HR chiefs (CHROs) and IT chiefs (CIOs) share a common understanding of how AI will impact the future of work (www.gartner.com [1]). This misalignment at the top levels of leadership highlights the risk that companies may implement AI without a cohesive plan to adapt job roles, workflows and skills. Gartner analysts warn that as the pace of AI-driven change accelerates, CIOs are increasingly finding themselves acting as “accidental talent leaders” tasked with workforce transformation - a role they are not traditionally prepared for (www.gartner.com [2]).

To bridge this gap, Gartner advises that HR and IT leaders must collaborate closely. **Investing in new skills, redefined roles and clear change-management structures** is crucial for realising AI’s potential (www.gartner.com [3]). Notably, a separate Gartner study of 350 large firms found that roughly **80%** of organisations piloting “autonomous” AI systems reported cutting staff, yet those layoffs showed no improvement in return on investment (www.gartner.com [4]). In other words,

companies that seek cost savings by eliminating jobs may sacrifice valuable human capabilities without gaining the productivity uplift they expect. The findings reinforce that to capture value from AI, businesses should focus on rethinking processes and upskilling people - ensuring technology is guided by human insight - rather than treating head count reduction as a shortcut to efficiency.

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Key Statistics

- 10 percentage points - increased likelihood an AI-displaced US worker is unemployed one year after layoff, Goldman Sachs
- 32% - UK businesses using at least one AI technology in 2026 (double the 2025 share), Department for Business survey
- 53% - headcount growth at companies most exposed to AI since 2019 (vs 36% at less-exposed peers), PwC global jobs analysis
- 69% - growth in jobs requiring AI-related skills since 2019 (vs 9% for all jobs), PwC Global AI Jobs Barometer
- 80% - firms piloting autonomous AI that reported job cuts with no added ROI, Gartner survey

KEY TAKEAWAY

Ensure your AI adoption plan factors in workforce redesign and alignment between HR and IT leadership. Prioritise upskilling and new roles over job cuts to realise productivity and ROI gains from AI in the long run.

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