LUMO INSIGHTS

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Vodafone’s AI job cuts highlight workforce strategy gap as Gartner predicts net job gains

Executive Summary

In Germany, Vodafone’s telecom arm said on 9 November it will cut around 2,300 jobs over the next two financial years as part of a restructuring programme aimed at improving competitiveness and cutting costs (www.broadbandtvnews.com [1]). Meanwhile, two global surveys released on 10 November reveal a wide gap between AI ambition and workforce preparedness: Deloitte found only 16% of organisations have a formal strategy for the workforce impact of new technologies (www.deloitte.com [2]), and a Lenovo study reported just 10% of IT leaders have redesigned their workplace for AI even though most call it critical for successful transformation (news.lenovo.com [3]). This gap between recognising AI’s importance and preparing for its effects on work underscores the need for business leaders to integrate technology deployment with proactive workforce planning.

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Vodafone Germany’s AI-driven restructuring

Vodafone’s German division, which employs around 12,000 people, announced on 9 November that it plans to eliminate approximately 2,300 jobs over the next two financial years (www.broadbandtvnews.com [1]). The layoffs - nearly a fifth of Vodafone’s local workforce - are part of an accelerated restructuring programme to improve competitiveness and reduce costs amid challenging market conditions (www.broadbandtvnews.com [2]).

In its announcement, Vodafone said it will simplify its organisational structures and make greater use of AI across the business (www.marketscreener.com [3]). For example, the operator plans to use AI to analyse network faults and support customer service enquiries in order to speed up response times and cut costs (www.broadbandtvnews.com [4]). It also intends to merge its sales and customer service functions and pursue the staff cuts through 'socially responsible measures', with consultations involving employee representatives scheduled for early 2027 (www.broadbandtvnews.com [5]).

Vodafone’s move shows how some firms are turning to automation to reorganise work and trim headcount in response to competition. However, broader industry data suggests explicit job reductions are seldom the primary aim of AI projects: only 24% of enterprises in one survey prioritised workforce cuts as a goal of AI adoption (www.spglobal.com [6]).

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Boardrooms unprepared for AI’s workforce impact

A global survey by Deloitte’s Boardroom Programme, released on 10 November, indicates that many companies still treat technology transformation and human capital as separate priorities (www.deloitte.com [1]). Only 16% of the 806 board members and executives surveyed said their organisations have a strategy for the workforce impact of new technologies (www.deloitte.com [2]). Nearly half (49%) reported that their boards do not consistently consider people or skills when discussing AI and other technology transformations (www.deloitte.com [3]).

Deloitte’s report highlights a governance gap at the top. The firm is urging directors to close this gap by integrating people strategy into technology planning. It recommends that boards 'embed workforce strategy as a fundamental part of AI transformation' and push management to align tech initiatives with changes in roles, skills and organisational culture (www.deloitte.com [4]).

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Workplace redesign lags AI ambition

Also on 10 November, Lenovo released findings from its sixth annual Work Reborn: The AI-Ready Workplace study, which surveyed 1,200 IT leaders across 12 countries (news.lenovo.com [1]). The study found that 80% of IT decision-makers view a strong digital workplace as critical for successful AI-led transformation, yet only 10% say they have fundamentally redesigned their workplaces for AI (news.lenovo.com [2]).

The Lenovo report emphasises that 'AI deployment is not the same as workplace redesign' and that fully capturing AI’s benefits 'requires changes across workflows, employee roles, IT support and governance' (news.lenovo.com [3]). In practice, the findings imply that introducing AI tools alone isn’t enough - companies must re-engineer processes, roles and support systems to integrate AI into daily work and realise its value.

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Gartner predicts AI-driven job gains

A longer-term perspective on AI's impact comes from research firm Gartner, which offered an upbeat forecast at its IT Symposium on 10 November. Gartner projects that AI will create about 10.6 million new jobs globally by 2030, while eliminating 8.9 million - a net increase of roughly 1.7 million jobs (www.gartner.com [1]). The firm estimates that at most 1.8% of the worldwide workforce will be displaced by AI-driven automation, even as more than 20% of workers see their roles transformed by the decade's end (www.gartner.com [2]).

According to Gartner, organisations most advanced in AI 'view AI not as a replacement for labour, but as a catalyst to reinvent operations and rebalance workforce and technology capabilities' (www.gartner.com [3]). For business leaders, this suggests that broad AI adoption need not lead to an overall job collapse - especially if companies invest in retraining and transitioning employees into new roles. The possibility of net job growth indicates that while AI will significantly reshape work, its overall impact on employment could be positive.

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Key Statistics

- 2,300 - Planned job cuts at Vodafone Germany over two years as it increases automation (Vodafone, 2026)
- 16% - Share of global boards with a workforce strategy for technology transformation (Deloitte, 2026)
- 10% - Share of IT decision-makers who have redesigned their workplace for AI (Lenovo, 2026)
- 24% - Enterprises prioritising headcount reduction as a primary aim of AI adoption (S&P Global, 2026)
- 1.7 million - Net jobs forecast to be added worldwide by AI by 2030 (Gartner, 2026)

KEY TAKEAWAY

Check if your board has a strategy linking AI and workforce plans. If not, start redesigning how one or two key roles work with AI before scaling it across the firm.

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