HRCI

Redesigning Work: How AI Is Changing Jobs and How HR Can Lead

AI is changing how work gets done. For HR, it creates an opportunity to rethink job architecture and help organizations make more effective use of people and technology.



Now is an opportune time to think about the nature of work. Not candidates, systems, or policies, but the work itself.

Artificial intelligence has become ubiquitous in most work environments, including human resources. A large majority of HR professionals use it regularly, and many do so every day, according to HRCI data. And few can tune out the non-stop speculation about what it will do to the workforce, both in the U.S. and abroad.

While AI is certain to eliminate some jobs, and equally certain to create new ones, one thing not in dispute is that AI is changing how work gets done. While HRCI's 2026 State of HR Report showed that 71% of HR professionals are not concerned about losing their job to AI, the exact same percentage said they expect artificial intelligence to change their job.

Smart HR teams are working right now on how those changes will take place.

"Redesigning jobs for an AI reality is a skill every HR team will have to learn in the coming years," said Dr. Amy Dufrane, CEO of HRCI. "This is not something that should be left to chance. It deserves thoughtful consideration and hard work."

Though the promise of AI is to automate "work chores," experts say updates to job architecture and team structure are necessary to maximize organizational performance. As rote or mundane tasks are automated, professionals will gain more time to address higher-impact assignments.

"In an AI world where simple tasks that don't require your brain can be completed, we actually have to build more high-quality teams," said Kat Kibben, an author, recruiting trainer, and job posting specialist.

The Impact of AI

For all the talk about AI eliminating jobs nationwide, there is a great deal of evidence showing that AI could reshape more jobs than it replaces.

For example, researchers at Stanford's Digital Economy Lab tracked U.S. employment beginning in January 2021. Their August 2026 findings suggest that while AI has not caused widespread job displacement, its effects vary by age and occupation. Younger workers in roles highly exposed to AI have experienced greater employment declines, while employment has remained stable or increased in roles where AI complements human work.

A 2024 Harvard Business School study had similar findings. "Rather than solely eliminating jobs, generative AI creates new demand in augmentation-prone roles, suggesting that human-AI collaboration is a key driver of labor market transformation," Harvard Professor Suraj Srinivasan, one of the researchers, said earlier this year.

"Firms should view generative AI as an augmentation tool rather than merely a cost-cutting measure and align workforce training programs accordingly," he said.

This appears to be true outside the U.S. as well. According to an International Labour Organization study last year, one in four workers is in an occupation with some exposure to generative AI, and that number increases in high-income countries. That said, only about 3% of global employment falls into the highest-exposure category. Because most jobs still contain tasks that require human input, the organization concluded that transforming jobs, rather than fully automating them, is the most likely impact of generative AI.

"As argued by numerous economists, the key to unlocking the productivity benefits of GenAI lies not in the search of outright labour savings, but in the extent to which human expertise can be complemented with new technological capacities to reshape occupations and generate additional value," the study said.

In short, many are making the case that AI can—and often should—augment jobs, not replace them.

How HR Professionals Feel About AI

HRCI's 2026 State of HR Report asked thousands of HR professionals about their experiences involving AI. Here's what they had to say.

71% of HR professionals use AI regularly

29% use AI every day

54% trust AI to provide quality answers

82% did not see jobs lost to AI in their industry in 2025

77% did not expect to see jobs lost to AI in 2026

71% are "not at all concerned" about AI replacing their job

71% believe AI will change their job

29% say AI will generally increase productivity and efficiency

53% say their company offers no AI training at all

52% name "implementing new HR technologies" as one of two areas they're least prepared for

Indeed, a National Bureau of Economic Research study of almost 5,200 customer-support agents found that a generative AI assistant raised productivity by an average of 14%. That increased to an average of 34% among workers with lower levels of skill and experience. Rather than replacing the agents, the assistant improved their job performance—and it helped those with the least experience the most.

"The impact AI will have on our workforce largely depends on how we use it," Dufrane said. "Rather than replacing people, we can expand their capabilities. And that means redesigning jobs."

A Vision for Job Redesign

HR professionals may be tempted to start with the technology when redesigning jobs for an AI-enabled workplace, but Kibben argues that is a mistake. In fact, they say, there are many things to address before technology enters the conversation. Kibben's central concern is that organizations are chasing efficiency at the expense of outcomes. "We are moving faster, but we are not actually producing results faster," they said.

The antidote, they said, is to address something many companies overlook: clearly defining the work itself. "Job architecture is the baseline piece of data you need for all of your AI aspirations," they said. When the work is well understood, it becomes easier to define roles, identify relevant skills and experience, find the right personnel, see the correct role for technology, and acquire the technology itself. "How can you do any of those effectively if you don't actually define what you're looking for?" they said.

Kibben recommends HR professionals start by examining the basic mission. Why does a team exist? Why does a job exist? What purpose do they serve? The goal is "management from a place of impact instead of activity," they said. That focus grounds the effort because expectations remain stable as work is redefined or redistributed, and AI is added.

Kibben also recommends focusing on the value of human contribution, not just technical capability. In a world where work can be completed more easily, factors like experience, creativity, and judgment will become increasingly important.

"I deeply believe that discernment is the human skill everybody needs more than anything, no matter how this pans out," they said. "Looking at something and saying, 'this is bad' is actually a skill that's important."

As they put it, "Discernment is the skill of the future."

8 Steps to Redesigning Roles

Whether you are redesigning a single job or an entire team, there are several steps you can take to ensure a healthy process:

1. **Communicate Effectively.** Nationwide, there is a substantial amount of fear surrounding AI, stoked by speculation and sensational headlines about job elimination. Before undertaking job redesign on any scale, explain what you are doing, why you are doing it, how it will be executed, and what role employees will play. Transparent communication can help allay fear.

2. **Understand the Mission and the Work.** Before redesigning jobs or teams, it is necessary to understand the required outcomes. Rather than relying on broad corporate mission statements, this should address concrete questions such as, *why are we here, and what are we expected to do?* The latter question can be answered for various lengths of time, such as each month, quarter, and year. Think in terms of impact, rather than activity.

3. **Break Jobs Into Tasks.** Generally, today's AI does not take over entire occupations. More often, it affects specific tasks. Most roles still contain work that requires human input. A task inventory can reveal which parts of a role AI can assist with, which it might absorb completely, and which must remain firmly in human hands.

4. **Ask Employees Where They Want Help.** Employees should play a central role in identifying which aspects of their work could benefit from redesign, automation, or additional support. Stanford researchers surveying U.S. workers found that employees welcome automation for nearly half of their tasks, often to free up time for higher-value work. In many occupations, workers prefer an equal partnership between humans and AI. They also found that a substantial share of AI applications developed by startups focus on tasks employees would prefer not to automate. These findings underscore the importance of involving employees in decisions about where and how AI should be used.

5. **Conduct Necessary Training.** In a study of customer-support agents, an AI assistant raised productivity overall, with the greatest gains among the least experienced workers. These findings suggest that AI can support employee learning and development, but training remains essential to using the technology effectively. HRCI data suggests that companies have been slow to provide such training. Employees should understand how to use available AI tools, recognize their limitations, and protect proprietary information and data privacy.

6. **Pilot Programs and Feedback Collection.** Though advances are coming quickly, AI's abilities are still uneven. Harvard Business School research involving more than 750 consultants found that AI substantially improved productivity and work quality on tasks within its capabilities. However, when used for tasks beyond those capabilities, AI *increased* the likelihood of errors. Because those boundaries are hard to identify, small pilots are the safest way to find them. Where AI falls short, redesigned roles can keep human judgment and review in place.

7. **Create Realistic Job Descriptions.** With a thorough understanding of job responsibilities at the task level, insights from pilot programs and employee feedback, organizations can develop job descriptions that clearly define how work is divided between employees and AI. Involving employees in the process can also encourage adoption and help ensure that redesigned roles reflect the realities of day-to-day work. These more accurate job descriptions can then inform job postings that prioritize relevant skills and experience over unnecessary qualifications.

8. **Protect Career Pathways.** HRCI data shows that 26% of HR professionals have no clear career path, and 41% say it is not well defined. The same research indicates that those with a clear career path are happier at work. Without careful planning, redesigning roles could create additional uncertainty around advancement opportunities. As roles evolve, organizations should ensure that career trajectories remain clearly defined.

Making Job Redesign a Strategic Priority

To properly redesign jobs with AI in mind, HR should be involved in creating the organization's overall AI strategy. Ensure HR is represented in policy and procurement working groups, or, at minimum, has a liaison. The impact of job design goes far beyond the HR team, with opportunities to improve how work is structured and performed across the organization.

"Some capabilities can be seen as an investment, and this is definitely one of them," Dufrane said. "This is something we can prioritize now that will ultimately benefit every team and every department. It's a skill we'll use repeatedly in coming years as technology continues to evolve."