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AI & the Future of Work

How artificial intelligence is changing jobs, skills, productivity and the way organizations operate — and what leaders should do next.



AI CAPABILITY

- Assist tasks
- Coordinate steps
- Scale repeatable work



HUMAN JUDGMENT

- Set direction
- Handle exceptions
- Own decisions



WORK REDESIGN

- Map workflows
- Measure outcomes
- Build capability

A practical briefing for founders, business leaders, managers and professionals.

Synthesis of published research and documented survey findings. This is not an original Chief Magazine survey. Forecasts and self-reported findings are labelled and sourced.

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The question is no longer whether work will change.

The practical challenge is to redesign work so AI capability translates into useful, safe and measurable outcomes.

1 in 4

workers globally are in occupations with some exposure to generative AI

3.3%

of global employment is in the ILO's highest exposure category

82%

of surveyed leaders said 2025 was pivotal for rethinking strategy

What the evidence says

AI is moving from occasional assistance towards multi-step workflows. The International Labor Organization's 2025 analysis finds that one in four workers worldwide is in an occupation with some exposure to generative AI, while transformation is more likely than full replacement for most occupations.

- Task exposure is not a job-loss forecast. Exposure measures potential influence on tasks; it does not mean the same share of jobs will disappear.
- Leaders expect organizational change. Microsoft's 2025 Work Trend Index reported that 82% of surveyed leaders saw 2025 as a pivotal year to rethink strategy and operations; 81% expected agents to be integrated into AI strategy over the following 12–18 months.
- Work redesign matters. Tool access alone is insufficient without clear processes, employee capability, governance and accountability.

The central thesis

The strongest organizations will not simply add AI to existing processes. They will decide which tasks to automate, where human judgment remains essential, how employees build new skills and how performance is measured.

How to use this report

Leaders can prioritize workflows and governance; founders can extend a small team's capacity; managers can plan role redesign; and professionals can build adaptable skills instead of chasing a fixed list of supposedly future-proof jobs.

Sources: ILO–NASK (20 May 2025); Microsoft 2025 Work Trend Index (23 April 2025). Full references on page 10.

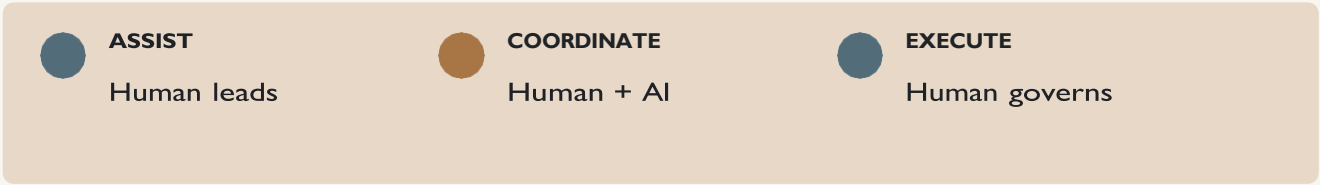
From assistance to workflow execution

AI's workplace impact is best understood as a progression in how tasks are assigned, completed and supervised.

Stage	What AI does	Human responsibility	Example
1. Assistant	Drafts, summarizes, searches, explains or generates options.	Set context, check accuracy and decide what to use.	A sales manager summarizes account notes and drafts follow-up.
2. Human–AI workflow	Completes defined steps across connected tools under supervision.	Set objectives, review exceptions and approve consequential actions.	AI classifies requests and prepares responses.
3. Agent-enabled process	Coordinates multiple steps across systems within defined permissions.	Design guardrails, monitor performance and remain accountable.	Support workflow routes tickets, retrieves knowledge and drafts resolutions.

Where change may be most visible

- Knowledge work: research synthesis, first drafts and information retrieval.
- Software: code suggestions, test generation, debugging and documentation.
- Customer operations: classification, response drafting and routing, with escalation controls.
- Management: scenario analysis and decision support, with humans accountable for choices.



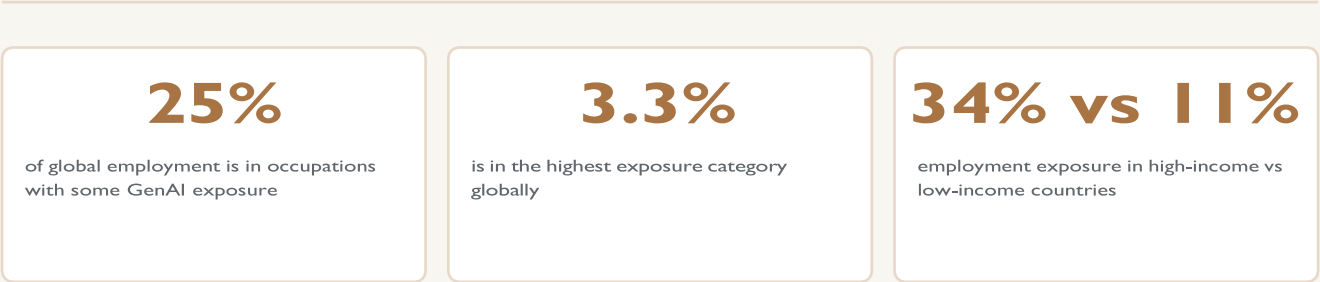
Design principle

Automate a task only after understanding its purpose, inputs, failure modes and hand-offs. A poorly designed process can become a faster, more scalable source of errors.

The graphic illustrates a conceptual progression in workflow scope, not a measured adoption statistic. Organizations may use all three approaches at once.

Exposure does not equal replacement

A responsible workforce analysis distinguishes the tasks within a role from the role itself.



What the ILO found

The ILO's 2025 index combines task-level analysis, expert input and AI model predictions. Clerical occupations remain the most exposed; highly digitized professional and technical tasks are also affected. These estimates describe potential exposure, not the percentage of jobs expected to disappear.

Question	Why it matters	What to examine
Which tasks are repeatable?	Structured digital tasks may be easier to assist or automate.	Volume, consistency, input quality and exceptions.
Where is context essential?	Some work depends on relationships, tacit knowledge or ambiguity.	Customer trust, local context and judgement.
What must remain accountable?	High-impact decisions need clear ownership and recourse.	Approval rights, audit trails and legal obligations.
How will roles change?	Task changes may alter responsibilities without eliminating a job.	New skills, training, workload and performance measures.

Avoid the false precision trap

Do not tell employees that a role is “safe” or “doomed” based on one exposure score. Use task mapping, workflow pilots and regular review to understand how the work is actually changing.

Source: International Labor Organization and NASK, Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure, 20 May 2025.

Measure outcomes, not AI activity

Faster drafts or more generated code are inputs to productivity—not proof of it.

What to measure in an AI pilot

AI may shorten research cycles, reduce repetitive writing and support software development. Realized value depends on the whole process: errors, checking time, duplicated work, integration costs and whether saved time is redirected to valuable activity.

Measure	Baseline	After pilot / interpretation
Cycle time	Time from request to completion	Same measure over comparable work; did it become faster?
Quality	Error, rework or customer correction rate	Did speed improve without quality loss?
Cost to serve	Labor and technology cost per case	Include licensing, integration and human review.
Capacity	Cases, projects or customers handled	Was saved time used productively?
Risk	Incidents, escalations and policy exceptions	Did controls remain effective?

Illustrative example: customer support

A team handles 1,000 routine tickets a month. It pilots AI to classify tickets and draft responses. Compare handling time, resolution quality, customer satisfaction, escalation rates and the cost of human review with the pre-pilot baseline. If drafting time falls but corrections rise sharply, the business may not have gained value.

Pilot scorecard

Record the baseline before launch. Define success thresholds. Test representative cases. Track exceptions and user feedback. Scale only when results are repeatable and the full operating cost is understood.

Evidence note: This report avoids a universal percentage claim for AI productivity. Results vary by task, worker experience, tool quality, process design and measurement method.

Small teams can gain capacity—but not a strategy.

AI can lower the cost of trying ideas and handling routine work. It does not remove the need to understand customers or build a viable business.

Practical starting points

For startups and small businesses, AI can extend a team's ability to research markets, prepare proposals, support customers, document processes, analyze data and build digital products. Start with a specific workflow and measurable outcome, rather than a broad technology mandate.

Function	Potential use	Human check
Sales and marketing	Research accounts, draft outreach, summarize calls.	Verify facts; personalize messaging.
Operations	Classify requests, prepare SOPs, extract document data.	Check edge cases, privacy and accuracy.
Finance/admin	Explain variances, categorize documents, draft reports.	Reconcile with source records; retain approvals.
Product/engineering	Prototype, generate tests, explain code, document.	Review security, architecture, licenses and reliability.
Customer support	Retrieve approved knowledge and draft responses.	Escalate sensitive cases; monitor quality.

India-specific considerations

Language and context: test across the languages, accents and customer contexts the business serves. Data and trust: understand where customer and employee data is processed.

IT services and outsourcing: evaluate how AI changes delivery economics, staffing and client expectations. Skills and transition: pair tool access with training and opportunities to move toward higher-value work.

Founder's rule of thumb

Choose one costly, frequent workflow with measurable outcomes. Prove value there before buying a broad suite of tools or announcing an organization-wide AI transformation.

This section presents practical implications, not a quantified forecast for India's workforce. Add current NASSCOM, government and Labor-market statistics only after verifying the original publications.

Redesign roles around outcomes

AI adoption becomes an operating-model question when it changes who performs tasks, who reviews them and who owns the result.

What employer research signals

Microsoft's 2025 Work Trend Index surveyed 31,000 workers across 31 countries and combined survey findings with LinkedIn Labor-market trends and Microsoft 365 productivity signals. It reflects the perspectives and data available to Microsoft, not a census of all employers.

81%

of surveyed leaders expected agents to be integrated into AI strategy in 12–18 months

46%

said their organization was using agents to automate workflows or processes

51%

of surveyed managers expected AI training/upskilling to become a key team responsibility

A practical skills framework

AI literacy: know capabilities, limitations and safe data practices.

Critical evaluation: check evidence, spot unsupported claims and compare with source material.

Domain expertise: apply industry and customer context.

Workflow design: define inputs, outputs, steps and failure points.

Communication and judgement: manage relationships and ambiguous situations.

Accountability: know who approves work and owns outcomes.

Leadership checklist

Communicate why AI is being introduced. Involve employees in workflow design. Set approved-use policies. Give people time to learn. Recognize quality and risk management—not just speed. Review roles and measures as processes change.

Source: Microsoft, 2025 Work Trend Index Annual Report, 23 April 2025. Figures are survey findings and expectations, not verified adoption rates for all organizations.

Make responsible use part of the design

Safeguards should reflect the task, data, customer impact and level of autonomy.

Risks and practical controls

AI can produce plausible but inaccurate information, expose sensitive data, reproduce bias, create security vulnerabilities or obscure how a result was produced. Agentic workflows add concerns when systems can take actions across software, contact customers or modify records.

Risk	Example	Practical control
Accuracy	A fabricated policy or figure in an answer.	Use approved sources; review consequential outputs.
Privacy	Customer data pasted into an unapproved tool.	Approved tools, data classification and access controls.
Security	Agent acts beyond its intended scope.	Least privilege, sandboxing, action limits and logs.
Bias	Screening disadvantages a group of applicants.	Test outcomes, document criteria and allow review.
IP/provenance	Unverified or unlicensed generated content.	Review licensing and retain source records.
Overreliance	Employees accept output without checking.	Train for verification and define escalation.

A simple risk-tiering approach

Lower impact: internal brainstorming or low-risk formatting—approved tools and user review.

Moderate impact: customer communications, operational analysis or code changes—source checks, testing and named reviewers.

High impact: employment, credit, health, legal or other consequential decisions—formal assessment, human accountability, documented controls and legal review.

Do not outsource accountability

A human-in-the-loop label is not enough. The reviewer needs expertise, time, access to evidence and authority to reject the output.

This framework is a practical starting point, not legal advice. Requirements vary by jurisdiction and use case; review applicable privacy, employment, sector and AI regulations.

Move from experimentation to evidence

A disciplined first 90 days helps a business learn where AI is useful without committing prematurely to a large transformation.

Period	Actions	Deliverables
Days 1–30 ASSESS	Map 3–5 workflows. Interview employees. Record volume, time, quality, cost and risks. Select one manageable use case.	Baseline metrics; workflow map; risk review; named owner.
Days 31–60 PILOT	Test with a limited user group. Use approved data and tools. Compare with the current process. Record errors and feedback.	Pilot results; exception log; training notes; cost estimate.
Days 61–90 DECIDE	Evaluate benefits and full costs. Improve controls. Decide to scale, redesign or stop. Set ownership and monitoring.	Decision memo; rollout plan; updated metrics; accountable owner.

Before scaling, ask

Did the workflow improve on the baseline in a way that matters? Were accuracy, privacy, security and employee experience acceptable? Can results be reproduced across users and realistic conditions? Are integration, licensing, training, review and maintenance costs included? Who owns the workflow after the pilot?

Decision rule

Scale when value is measurable, risks are controlled and an owner is accountable. Redesign when the opportunity is real but the workflow or controls are weak. Stop when the evidence does not justify the cost or risk.

One-page readiness scorecard

- **Business value:** a clear problem and measurable baseline.
- **Data and process:** inputs are understood and access is appropriate.
- **People:** users are trained and able to escalate.
- **Governance:** permissions, review and accountability are defined.
- **Economics:** total cost and benefit can be compared.

Prepare for change without pretending to predict everything.

The future of work will be shaped by technology, business decisions, policy and the choices organizations make about people.

Core references

The evidence does not support a single, universal prediction about which jobs will disappear or how much productivity every company will gain. It supports a more useful response: understand tasks, test workflows, measure outcomes, build employee capability and make accountability explicit.

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- OECD. AI and work research portal. Additional policy, employment and workplace evidence; verify publication dates and methods before citing individual figures.
<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/ai-and-work.html>

Interpretation and limitations

This is a synthesis of published research, not original survey research by Chief Magazine. Survey results reflect the respondents and methods of the named publisher; forecasts are not observed outcomes. The ILO estimates are global and should not be presented as India-specific job-loss estimates. Microsoft findings are vendor-sponsored research and should be read in that context. Examples and the 90-day roadmap are advisory frameworks, not measured case studies.

The next step

Choose one workflow. Establish a baseline. Run a controlled pilot. Share what works and what fails. Organizations that learn responsibly will be better prepared than those that simply buy more AI.