

Workday Global Workforce Report: AI Is Rewriting Jobs More Than It's Cutting Them

Demand for Basic AI Skills Fell 25% This Year as Companies Look for People Who Can Build With AI, Not Just Prompt It

Meanwhile, the Usual Ways People Grow at Work, Like Promotions and Moves to New Internal Roles, Are Stalling

PLEASANTON, Calif., Oct. 5, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- [Workday, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: WDAY), the enterprise AI platform for HR, finance, and IT, today released its [October 2026 Global Workforce Report](#), revealing most business leaders do not expect artificial intelligence to shrink their workforce. Instead, they expect it to change the jobs people already have, but many workers say they aren't getting the help they need to keep up.

The report found that 40% of business leaders expect AI to help them get more out of the employees they already have, while just 28% expect it to reduce headcount. At the same time, the usual ways people grow at work are stalling. Moves to new roles inside the same company fell at 57% of employers, promotions stayed flat, and nearly 4 in 10 employees said their company went through a reorganization or restructuring in the past year.

"Employees may not be changing jobs, but their jobs are changing around them," said Phil Willburn, vice president, people systems, intelligence & support, Workday. "Leaders need to be honest about what's different and give people a way to keep up."

Basic AI Skills Are Already Losing Value

The clearest sign of how fast things are moving shows up in job postings. Analyzing skills data on job requisitions across over 550 employers using Workday Recruiting, demand for basic AI skills, like simple prompting, rose through late 2025, peaked in January 2026, and then fell 25% over the following months. Meanwhile, demand for hands-on skills like building AI tools, automating workflows, and AI engineering rose steadily, climbing 51% between September 2025 and July 2026. Companies have moved on from wanting people who can just use AI to wanting people who can build with it.

Workers are trying to keep pace. In a September 2026 survey of 6,000 full-time employees, 79% of workers said they know what skills they need to succeed, but only 66% said their employer actually helps them develop those skills — a 13-point gap between what employees know they need and the support they're getting. Confidence is high, with 65% saying they're confident they can learn new skills if asked to. In Workday's August [AI@Work Pulse](#) survey of 5,944 workers, 62% of those who use AI for nearly all their work said they think it will make their current skills less valuable. Still, more than three-quarters (76%) of those heavy AI users said they expect it to open up new career opportunities.

Making matters harder, job requisition data from companies using Workday Recruiting show companies asking for less of the very skills that would help workers through this shift: mentions of management and leadership skills fell 7% and training skills fell 13% between Sept. 2025 and July 2026.

Fewer Ways Up Inside, More Competition Outside

Moving to a new role inside the same company is getting harder. Internal moves fell at 57% of employers year over year, and promotion rates worldwide stayed essentially flat. According to the global survey, employees trying to move internally most often pointed to hiring being paused for the role, managers who didn't support the move, and selection processes that didn't feel fair. About half of employees didn't even try to move internally last year, and of those, 27% said they simply didn't see an attractive opportunity inside their company.

That's pushing people to look outside instead, and they're not looking alone: 84% of job seekers said they used AI during their search, according to Workday's AI@Work Pulse survey. The median number of applicants for each job that gets filled climbed to 69, up from 58 a year earlier, a possible consequence of AI making it easier for people to apply to more jobs at once. But that extra volume didn't slow hiring down either. The time it takes to fill a role held steady at about 60 days, because more applications don't necessarily mean more qualified candidates. Competition is especially fierce in two industries: the number of applicants per job that gets filled rose 27% year over year in financial services and 40% in technology and media. More than half of applicants in each sector, 53% and 57% respectively, said AI increased how many roles they applied to. More applications aren't translating into faster hiring. Employers said roles mostly stay open because candidates lack the right skills or because pay, location, or flexibility don't line up with what people want.

"The question isn't just whether someone has done the exact job before," Willburn said. "It's whether they can learn fast enough to solve the next problem."

Employees Are Staying, But They're Less Likely to Recommend Their Employer

Because switching companies feels riskier in a slow labor market, employees are staying where they are. Voluntary turnover sits at roughly 16% a year, and about 70% of employees are still with the same company two years later. But Workday's data suggests staying isn't the same as being happy.

Across every industry analyzed, employees who plan to stay are less likely to recommend their employer to others, a gap that reaches 11 points in the public sector. A lot of people plan to stay in their jobs, but fewer of them would tell a friend to come work there. That's a sign of caution, not commitment. Many workers appear to be sticking with the uncertainty they already know rather than risk something new.

"There's a lot of quiet unease in the workplace right now," Willburn said. "Staying isn't the same as buying in, and companies that treat it that way will pay for it in productivity."

About the Report

This report draws on several sources. Figures on internal moves, promotions, turnover and retention come from de-identified workforce data inside companies that use Workday's HR software, limited to active customers with at least 250 employees and matched year-over-year. Figures on what leaders expect from AI, and on employees' confidence and support in learning new skills, come from a global survey of 6,001 employees and business leaders, including about 1,780 decision-makers. Figures on how workers use AI in their jobs and job searches come from a separate Workday survey of 5,944 workers (AI@Work Pulse). Figures on skills demand in job postings are based on the de-identified skills data across roughly 550 enterprise employers using Workday Recruiting from September 2025 through July 2026. For more details, read the full methodology at the end of [the report](#).

For More Information

- Read the full [October 2026 Global Workforce Report](#).
- Get an [economic analysis of the data](#)
- Discover five key [takeaways from the research](#).
- Learn more about the immense [transformation happening inside companies](#).

About Workday

[Workday](#) operates at the heart of the enterprise – HR, finance, and IT – where the margin for error is effectively zero. By tightly coupling AI with the context, guardrails, and trusted processes that run the business, Workday goes beyond AI that assists with work to agents that are capable of driving measurable outcomes. More than 11,500 organizations worldwide, including more than 65% of the Fortune 500, trust Workday to deliver. For more information about Workday, visit [workday.com](#).

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