

# AI Continues to Rewrite the Rules of Employment

By Don Sutherland

Less than four years after ChatGPT burst onto the public scene, artificial intelligence is embedded in a growing range of office software, customer service platforms, hospital diagnostics and factory floors, reshaping how work is performed and who performs it. Over the past year, companies across industries have accelerated the deployment of generative AI tools to draft reports, write code, analyze contracts and handle routine customer inquiries. AI is now increasingly positioned as a co-worker or partner rather than a distant automation threat.

The shift is redefining skills at a rapid pace. Employers are placing a premium on data literacy, prompt engineering, and the ability to supervise automated systems. Routine cognitive tasks are being streamlined. In their place, demand is rising for workers who can interpret AI outputs, manage complex workflows and exercise judgment where algorithms fall short. Human skills such as critical thinking, communication and ethical oversight are gaining new prominence, not despite automation but because of it. The shifting importance in such skills is elevating the importance of a liberal education.

Education and training systems are scrambling to keep pace. Universities are embedding AI modules into business, law and medical curricula. Corporations are launching rapid reskilling programs, often teaching employees how to collaborate with AI tools rather than compete against them.

The broader labor market impact remains uneven. High-skilled workers who leverage AI effectively are seeing productivity gains and, in some cases, wage premiums. Lower-wage workers in clerical or repetitive digital roles face greater vulnerability, though AI has also opened pathways for nontraditional workers to access knowledge-intensive tasks once reserved for specialists. The trajectory suggests a labor market less defined by job titles and more by adaptable capabilities.

At least for now, the historic pattern tied to the introduction of new technology is still holding. Historic experience reveals that new technology rarely eliminates jobs outright; instead, it reorganizes work. Displacement tends to be concentrated and short-term, while job creation is broader and unfolds over time, often emerging in entirely new industries, markets, and professions that did not previously exist. Until strong contradictory evidence emerges, historic experience is the base case for the evolution and proliferation of AI.